Final creative project: The creation of a book of sparks

Kelly C. Dennis

The University of Montana
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FINAL CREATIVE PROJECT:
THE CREATION OF A BOOK OF SPARKS

By

Kelly C. Dennis

B.M.Ed., University of Alaska, Anchorage, 1987

Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements
For the degree of

Master of Interdisciplinary Studies

University of Montana

August 2000

Approved by

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Chairman, Board of Examiners

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Dean, Graduate School

1-2-01
Date
Creation of The Book of Sparks

Advisor: Dorothy Morrison

The intent of this project was to create a book of poetry designed to spark ideas for movement, musical accompaniment, visual ideas, or further writing. The poetry in the books was mostly written by music students in grades three through six working together in small groups, and students working with the teacher. Some pieces were created by individual students, some by entire classes working together, and some by the teacher alone. The teacher then created a separate book for each of two elementary schools: Rogers Park Elementary, and Chugach Optional Elementary, both in Anchorage, Alaska.

To begin the project, the teacher allowed students to form their own small groups, and required each group to write at least one poem, and then to orchestrate and/or choreograph their poem. The teacher provided class time for student groups to practice on their own and in front of the class. The final results were recorded on videotape, and in some cases groups performed their poems during school assemblies.

Poems selected by the teacher were put into booklets, which were then used by the schools to raise money for technology improvements.
1. Restatement of Intent

The intent of this project was to create a book of poetry, more specifically, poetry which was designed to spark ideas for movement, musical accompaniment, visual ideas, or further writing. I set out to co-write this book with my students, to seek out publishing options, and to present the book publicly at a school show where students would be able to perform their poems with additional movement and musical orchestration. I also wanted my students to see how they could spark their own ideas and those of others in hopes that they would be able to use this knowledge in other creative academic and non-academic situations.

I saw this project as a way to build on the work I had done with my students in previous years. I had gotten ideas for teaching students how to orchestrate poems and stories from attending various Orff workshops and from Jane Frazee’s book *Discovering Orff* and had just started to try some of these ideas with my students in 1994, the year before I started the Creative Pulse summer program. In the spring of that same year I took a creative movement workshop taught by Karen Kaufmann and as a result, started working with ideas from the workshop and her two books *The Language of Movement* and *A Collection of Creative Movement Lesson Plans*. The books mentioned here and those listed in my bibliography were valuable resources for plans and teaching ideas throughout the preparation for and implementation of my final creative project. In my first Creative Pulse field project, I took my introductions of these concepts further by doing two separate units with three classes of music students who were in combination classes of
third and fourth grades. In the fall I worked with these three classes adding musical orchestration to poetry and introducing group writing. Early in the spring I introduced several creative movement concepts to these same classes to lay the groundwork for them to add choreography to poetry later that year. In the movement unit, students had the option of either writing a poem or choosing one of several pieces I had pre-selected for them. The student response from both of these units was enthusiastic and exciting. It was the first time I had seen the majority of students embrace an assignment with so much passion. They loved having these creative opportunities, and continued to ask for similar projects every year.

My final creative project grew out of this enthusiasm from my students, my own recently acquired passion for writing which came as a result of my time at the Creative Pulse, and my desire to greatly intensify this work with my students.
2. What Actually Happened

I worked on this project with fifteen classes of students in grades three through six. Six of those classes were from Chugach Optional Elementary and the other nine were at Rogers Park Elementary. In each class I followed the same format to get the projects going:

I introduced the idea of sparks. This was a discussion about where ideas come from, how we go about getting an idea when we need one, and why it is important to know what kinds of things help spark ideas for you.

We talked about specific kinds of words in poetry that could inspire ideas about sounds, movement, or visual art.

We wrote at least one poem together as a class, and analyzed it to discover its sparking capabilities.

I demonstrated one example of an orchestration of a poem, and one example of accompanying a poem with movement. In each class, I purposely made one of the demonstrations a non-example, in other words with movements or musical sounds that were blatantly inappropriate, so we could talk about what was good and what was bad and why. These discussions always included may other ideas about what could have been done. In this way I was able to clearly articulate my
expectations for their projects, and help them to see how they might begin to come up with their own ideas.

I allowed students to pick their own group members, and group sizes could be from two to four students.

I limited the writing to subjects about nature or space because many classes in these grade levels were studying space or ecology.

Each group composed at least one poem.

I worked with each of the groups on writing and re-writing until I gave them approval to begin orchestrating and/or choreographing their pieces. I allowed students to use whatever movement or musical ideas they came up with as long as they could clearly explain how their chosen accompaniment went with their poem. Students were also allowed to submit visual ideas, but those had to be worked on outside of class due to the limited time and lack of supplies available during their thirty-minute music classes.

When almost all of the groups had finished writing and accompanying their poems, they started “dry run” performances in front of the class. Each group was required to do two dry runs and to give other students in the class the opportunity to give constructive feedback. During these dry runs, each group was also given
the opportunity to explain to the class why they chose their particular music and/or movements.

The groups were given additional practice time to polish their performances before the final run through.

During the final run through, both the principal and the classroom teacher were invited, and the performance was video taped. The purpose of the taping was primarily for students to be able to view their own performances, but it also served as a way for me to document this part of the project.

Students at both schools were given the option of performing during a school assembly.

This part of the project took ten weeks for all classes to complete. Every group was able to bring their project to a final performance in spite of illnesses, vacations, students moving away, and new students moving in. Several groups chose to perform in assemblies and were very well received by parents and students. At Chugach Optional, I was able to have all the groups perform at one assembly, and at Rogers Park, three or four groups at a time were invited to perform during the regular monthly assemblies. I then created a separate book for each school containing the work of the students and myself. Both books were used by the schools as technology fundraisers.
3. What Were the Expected or Unexpected Results?

I was encouraged by the student response to the discussion of ideas and what sparks them. Many students cited certain types of music, sports, talking with friends, and drawing as being helpful to them, but most were unaware of what tools they could use to get their creativity going. I used the following hypothetical situation to help me illustrate the importance of knowing what sparks your imagination.

"Pretend you are at home and planning to go to a really big party or concert or sporting event later that evening, but your parents will not let you go until your homework is completed. Your assignment is a two page creative writing assignment. Now pretend that your much-anticipated outing is just on hour away. How will you get your ideas so you can finish your paper in time?"

We went from what to do to spark ideas in yourself, to what could you do to spark an idea in someone else to lead into the heart of the group poetry assignment.

When I proposed this project, the big unknown to me was the ratio of student writing to my writing or co-writing that would be present in the books. After I started working with my students, I saw that with some poetry my input would be
minimal, while with others it was a true co-writing venture between the students and me. After I first started making suggestions for changes, I found right away that I had to be aware of how they were perceived by my students. Some students were very receptive and were able to view my input as another opinion and use it or not as they saw fit. This was usually what I intended when I offered my ideas. However, many students regarded my input more as directions for change, rather than just suggestions to take or leave. With these groups, I simply backed off and confined my role more to answering questions and commenting positively on what I observed about their work.

Another unknown was the intensity of time and energy needed on my part. I chose to work with so many classes because I wanted to be sure that I had enough quality work to choose from so I could put together the best book possible for this project. I tried to do as much writing as I could with students during class time, but with thirty-minute periods, I found that I had to do most of the reading and re-writing suggestions at home. With fifteen classes all working on this project at the same time the cost in time and energy was dear. Even so, I found that I was easily absorbed by the work and motivated by the depth and the delightfulfulness of the student pieces. The hours at home melted away as I read and wrote and I always ended up working much longer than I expected. Knowing what I know now, I would choose to work more in depth with fewer classes, or at least fewer classes at a time.
One of the biggest surprises I got was during the initial phase of the project when I was first introducing it to the students. As I mentioned earlier in part two, I demonstrated two examples of what could be done with orchestration and choreography for every class. In each case, I made one of the examples ridiculous on purpose so I would have a fun way to open class discussions about what kinds of things would and would not be acceptable for their projects. I was not subtle about this. Some of my antics included twirling around with one finger pointing to the top of my head while kicking my feet out at wild angles, shouting out one word here or there in a poem, playing so loudly that I could not be heard reciting the poem, and stopping in strange, random places and inserting sound effects for no apparent reason.

When I did these presentations, I always did the straightforward example first and then I took comments about the things I chose to do, what other things I could have done, and what the students might have done differently. The surprise came after I did the non-example. I found right away that the students were very unwilling to criticize me, even after a truly preposterous performance! After the first few presentations, I really enjoyed standing back and giggling inwardly while watching my students squirm around and look at each other until somebody got the courage to raise their hand and try to tell me what they thought in an extremely sheepish and polite way. Our discussion always got on track quickly after that first comment got out of the way, but I sure had fun enjoying those few awkward moments when the students were afraid of hurting my feelings.
One happy accident occurred when I was writing a poem with one of my fourth grade classes. I was having students suggest lines for the class poem, and as they did I wrote them on the board. The accident came when a student, Jonathan, said "in the bright sky," but I heard "winter bright sky" and wrote that on the board. He quickly corrected me, but we decided as a class (and with Jonathan’s permission) to leave it as it was. The result was the poem “Winter Day,” my favorite of all the poems done as a whole class.

Winter Day
Here comes the sun
It’s always fun
To play all day

Winter bright sky
Sun is shining
And melting snow

A major challenge came with the longest part of the project when students were working in their groups. Each class had five to seven groups trying to orchestrate and choreograph their pieces in the same space at the same time. Along with noise and space problems, we had to deal with the problems of sharing several one-of-a-kind instruments, and the challenge of getting all of the groups equipped and working quickly to make the best use of the thirty-minute class period.

To keep the chaos to a minimum I talked to the groups about whispering with their voices and their instruments, and I signaled with a flash of the lights if the
noise level rose too high. While the groups worked, I circulated the room constantly to make contact with each group and help solve instrument sharing and other problems that came up, and to keep up with what they were working on. Even with what I thought was close contact with all of the groups, I was still always pleasantly surprised during the first performances at what was accomplished amid the chaos.

I also found that I missed the days when I could simply walk in and teach a lesson. The group practice part of the project went on for several weeks and I was surprised at how hard it became to let go of having teacher directed lessons and be in such a student directed environment for so long. In many ways the constant job of monitoring, problem-solving, checking in, and generally being on-call, and not knowing exactly how my time was going to be spent in any one period was extremely demanding, and made my usual style of “I model, you do” teaching seem easy in comparison.

After each group had done two dry runs in front of the class I videotaped the last performance so they could see their own work. Everybody enjoyed seeing themselves and their classmates on tape. Many times the video served as a unique and practical way to show students how they look when they are performing, and point out what they need to improve on such as clarity and enunciation. In the future, I would like to experiment with using video taping as a way to improve performances of all kinds by taping dress rehearsals and letting students see.
themselves before a performance. This way they have the opportunity to see for themselves what needs to be worked on, instead of just having to take it from me.

I did not expect to end up with two books, nor did I know how the books would physically come together, but those ideas came to me while I was discussing my project with the principal at Rogers Park Elementary, Dr. Enid Hunter. I asked Dr. Hunter about using the book as a fundraiser somehow, and she suggested that we present it at the technology auction, which was scheduled two weeks away from that time. She was very supportive and excited about the idea, and offered to buy some of the special stationery for the poems. That was when I decided that each school really needed its own book. Dr. Hunter and I got enough of the fancy paper to make six books of twenty pages each.

In order to set off the poetry to be printed on the backsides of the stationery, I designed a border frame using some symbols from the folk art of Ghana. The symbols stand for sun, moon, and creation to complement our themes of nature and space. I chose the Ghanaian symbols to tie into the African drumming I had introduced earlier in the year just before beginning this project.

Another unexpected development was the timeline: I would have to have a book completely finished, with six copies made, by April 14. To complete the book, I designed the cover, had color copies made of two student paintings and one of my own, and did all of the printing and binding.
The Book of Sparks for Rogers Park includes 27 poems written by students or co-written by students and myself, three color copies of paintings, two of my own poems, and a title page, dedication and forward. I realized after this book was finished that the forward was really a preface since it was written by me. I made that change in the book for Chugach Optional Elementary. Its format is similar to the Rogers Park book, but it was printed on plain paper with the border on both sides of the paper, and it does not contain student artwork.
4. What was the Significance of this Project?

As the students finished their projects, I had class discussions with them about what they learned, how they got their ideas, and why they thought we spent so much time on one assignment. In every class the subject of time was a good discussion. Some classes were able to see right away that the final performance was not the only goal of the project. Almost all students spoke about the difficulties and benefits of doing group work, and the importance of working through disagreements to get to those benefits. Many students said they felt this project was a good opportunity for people to find their own ways to "shine." We all had the wonderful opportunity to discover the many talents in each other that are not apparent in day to day school life, or even in the regular music curriculum.

There were a variety of answers about how they got their ideas for both the writing and the accompaniment. For the writing, some chose their favorite planet or animal, some chose something they were researching in class, some just started throwing out lines like we did when we wrote the class poems, and others got ideas from friends, reading or television.

Accompaniment ideas were sparked mostly from the words or subjects in their poems, but in some cases, poems were written specifically with certain instruments in mind. In these instances, the instrument sparked the writing instead of the other way around. At first I was not too happy about students choosing their favorite instrument and writing
their poem so they could use it, as I felt this was approaching the assignment from the wrong direction. There were only a very few groups who worked this way, however, and in the end, their pieces went well and I silently applauded their creativity in finding a way to have some experiment time with a favorite instrument.

Many groups included movement as part of their accompaniment, but no one chose choreography alone to accompany their pieces.

This project integrated fine arts curriculum and science curriculum and had broad enough parameters so that most students could easily find a way to participate. Opportunities for leadership and the importance of individual roles within a group were an integral part of the assignment. Creative thinking and problem solving skills were constantly being challenged, as well as learning composure in brief performance situations. Since most students had to stretch outside of their comfort zones in some way to complete their projects, many students discovered a new interest in certain instruments, in acting, writing, or movement either through their own work or due to the influence of their group members. For example, a fifth grade boy named John was given the task of reciting the following poem while other group members played the accompaniment.

Alien

I am an alien from the sky
   I am saying “Hi”
   My name is Frisco
   And I love to disco!
   I do that boogie day and night
I do that boogie day and night
Some people think
That the music is a fright!

Instead of simply standing and saying the poem, John experimented with using his voice and body to add some humorous dramatic emphasis to the words. His first dramatic efforts were reinforced by the class during his group's dry runs. The end result was a performance that was far from polished, but well thought out and truly fun to watch.

John's work on this piece was one of the many delightful surprises that came as a result of this project. I have included this group performance as well as four others on the video appendix.
5. How was I Affected as a Teacher/Artist?

Professionally, I stretched myself to be sure the time used for this project was worthwhile and valuable not just to myself but to my students. To make sure I was focused and giving my best to every poem and every group, I made the commitment of time and effort during and after school and fulfilled it. In doing so, I received inspiration and motivation from my work with students. I have realized that I need to provide more opportunities for student directed creative projects of all kinds in my teaching. In the past I have worked with students on orchestrating and choreographing poetry, and even some writing, but I have never attempted a project of any kind with my students that had so intense a focus for such a long period of time, involving so many classes at the same time, and with the goal being a published product and not strictly a performance.

This project grew directly from my own love of writing and with the discovery of how I spark my own thinking and creativity, both of which came as a result of my course work and apprenticeships at the Creative Pulse.

Journaling has made such a difference in the way that I deal with everyday life. I use it not only as an outlet for creative writing but as a way of working out the major and minor stresses that arise, and for recording the good times as well. I have even looked back on past years and discovered cycles of my own behavior that I needed to break out of in order to affect positive change. Writing has been an invaluable source of comfort and
insight to me and I am passionate about sharing my love of writing with my students.

My discovery of my own idea sparking capabilities came most clearly as I realized how movement was so directly connected with mental clarity and creativity for me. This realization came from my creative movement apprenticeship, the classes on the body-mind connection and from my drama and drumming apprenticeships. There were two specific instances during my time at the Creative Pulse that clearly demonstrated to me the intensity of my own body-mind connection.

The first one came while I was attending a session of my drama apprenticeship during the second year of my program. We were all asked to recite a memorized tongue-twisting poem at the beginning of the class. All of the students had a great deal of difficulty saying the poem without stammering over the tongue twisters. We were then instructed to "get moving and stay moving" on the stage for several minutes, and then we were each asked to say the poem again. I was then able to recite the poem correctly the first time and with very little effort. It was an amazing feeling to have the poem seem to flow out of me when I could not say even a single line smoothly only minutes before. I have used movement this way several times to jump-start my own thinking and to increase alertness and focus of classes and performing groups.

The second instance came during my third year at the Creative Pulse when it happened that several students took both the painting and African drumming apprenticeships at the
same time as I did. As a result, we would get together in the painting studio after classes were over for the day and practice drumming for awhile before working on our paintings. After these drumming practices I always noticed that I was much more relaxed, focused, and better able to choose colors and get ideas for how to paint in new objects. Since I had never painted before, I was not at all at ease with the process and so the relaxation I felt after the drumming was significant for me.

As a result of the positive experiences I had during the painting apprenticeship I felt encouraged enough to follow through with an idea for painting at home. The idea came from a poem I wrote during my first summer at the Creative Pulse called “Clock Goes Ding.” I wrote this poem for my daughter Chelsea and it features the granny clock, which hangs in our living room.

Clock Goes Ding

Clock goes ding
It’s time for something
Time for breakfast
Time for lunch
Time for bananas
I’ll take a bunch!
Time for skating
Time for tea
Time for bath now
Come with me
Bath time bubble time
Lots of fun
Pull out the stopper
Watch the water run
Down down the drain
In a little whirlpool
No more water now
It’s getting pretty cool
Time for a towel
A cuddle and a kiss
Time for a story
I don’t want to miss
Night night time
I close my eyes
And wait for time
For the sun to rise

Over spring break I arranged the scene in my living room around the mantle where the clock hangs and did the painting. The idea for the poem “Djembeat”, which I included in the books for both schools, was sparked by my djembe in the painting. I then took my painting and poetry to school and was able to share some concrete examples of my own sparking process with my students.

I have taken several unusual artistic and professional risks this year both related and unrelated to this project. The first was the painting I mentioned before, the second was when a colleague at Chugach Optional asked me to play the piano part of a sonata for piano and recorder so we could play the piece together as staff participants in the Chugach talent share. Even though I can play the piano (technically speaking) performance is far outside my comfort zone. Still, I accepted the opportunity and again, made the time and effort commitment to myself that I knew it would take for me to get such a long piece learned well enough to play solidly. In the end, I really enjoyed diving in and mastering this piece. Heide (my recorder playing colleague) and I deepened our relationship and bonded as musicians. We played for the talent share and also for the
technology auction at Rogers Park the night the Book of Sparks for Rogers Park was presented.

The latest risk was also presented in the form of an opportunity. I was offered the chance to teach a three-week intensive exploring Alaskan Native Arts to a group of students in grades k/1/2 instead of my regular music schedule during the last three weeks of school. Since I am at each school for only two and one half days per week, Alice, the librarian at Chugach, would teach the class while I was at Rogers Park. I accepted this offer and am now teaching a class of twenty five mixed primary students. Alice and I are working with students on storytelling and acting out legends, native crafts, learning about and creating totem poles, native music and dance, and the cultural significance of native arts. We are writing curriculum as we go and it is one of the most exciting and stimulating teaching experiences of my life.

Much of my recent courage I owe not only to my final project, but also to my experiences in the Creative Pulse as a whole. I have learned enough about myself and what I am capable of that I am no longer walking away or shying away from opportunities to expand my horizons, and because of that, this has been an extremely exciting year artistically and professionally.
Bibliography


Social Security #: 263-37-9241
Last Name: DENNIS
First Name: KELLY
MI: C
Assignment: CLASSROOM MUSIC
Location: ROGERS PARK & CHUGACH OPTIONAL
Evaluation Type: Non-Focused

PART I - GENERAL APPRAISAL
This section is to be completed annually for every teacher.

SUMMARY OF TEACHER APPRAISAL PROCESS
Describe the appraisal process used this year. When applicable, include goals, follow-up recommendations, etc.

Goals on progress/achievement were discussed. Formal/informal observation(s) was made. Closure was reached at final appraisal meeting.

Data gathered from student, parent, and peer surveys was utilized to formulate appropriate components of this evaluation.

Comments (Optional) Use additional pages if necessary.

This year Kelly Dennis was committed to the idea of teaching students about instrumentation, orchestration, and choreography and then to inspire them to create original compositions that would combine these elements. Students in small groups of 3 or 4 wrote poetry embodying a concept and then chose appropriate instrumental sounds to accent certain ideas or words within the piece. Students were then offered the opportunity to share their products both within the classroom setting and also at an assembly. Kelly carried the idea one step further by "capturing" the projects in a booklet, which was combined with visual artwork. What a magnificent volume it turned out to be.

Kelly is totally dedicated to facilitating an attitude in students that music is not only something they can enjoy as originated and performed by others, but it is a wonderful form of self-expression for them as participants also. The projects Kelly's students did instilled confidence, self-awareness and personal satisfaction in being composers themselves.

Kelly is flexible, accommodating, and this year has worked closely with a new music teacher to enhance the excellence of the Rogers Park vocal music program. They are now working in tandem to produce a musical performance in alliance with the Community School program.

Kelly works hard to expose her students to a variety of musical expressions. By increasing the variety of experiences, she feels she can increase the appeal to student interest, engender pride in one's heritage and cultural background, and facilitate music integration into the curriculum. It is a pleasure to have such a talented and skilled artist as Kelly on the Rogers Park staff. She is wonderful.

Signature of Evaluatee: 

Date: 5/13/98

The evaluator's signature does not mean agreement with the content of evaluation; however, the signature does acknowledge receipt of the evaluation.

Signature of Evaluator: 

Date: 5/13/98

Personnel #302 (2/91) Distribution: Original - Personnel Copy - Evaluator Copy - Evaluatee
This book is dedicated to my students, my fellow writers, movers, and shakers.
Forward

The poems in this book were collected from work done as a part of music class this year. Students were given an assignment to write poetry using "noisy" or movement words, with the knowledge that they would later enhance their poetry with musical sounds and/or choreography. The written works are mostly collaborative pieces that were done either in cooperative groups of students or in collaboration with me, although some were done by students working alone. When the writing was completed, the students created orchestration and movement to bring their poetry to life. With a few of the pieces, I have included the students' ideas for their instrumentation and choreography. I hope you enjoy our collection of poems intended to inspire sound and motion!

Kelly Dennis
ANIMALS
Where Music is for Animals

Conga bears prowl
Cabasa constrictors crawl
Flexitone insects flitter all around

Slap stick crocodiles
Snapping in the air
Maraca rattlers
Ratchet frogs croaking everywhere

Glockenspiel mockingbirds
Vibraslap bees
Finger cymbal butterflies winging in the trees

Puili crickets, guiro goats
Metalophone fish
Here, music is for animals
Any kind you wish

It's really not the rain forest
Or near the ocean floor
It's just the plain old music room.
Come in!
And close the door!

By Kelly Dennis
Caterpillar

Caterpillar crawling on a leaf
Doesn’t really like to eat some beef
Climbing up to make a big cocoon
And then come out, just like a big balloon.

By Sarah Rockwell

Sarah accompanied her poem with an alto xylophone.
The Bird and the Frog

The bird soars through the air
While the wind whips through its feathers.
The birds chirps with delight
As the frog jumps through the air
And lands in a lily pad.
The frog makes a deep croak!

By Char Gaston, Rosa Hensley, and Jessica Heideman
Amazon

The Amazon has so many colors
It has so many dreams
It has so many animals
Like geese and snakes
Goodness sakes!

The Amazon has nice animals
And dangerous animals too
That will make your heart beat!

Toodeloo!

By Michael Scanlan, Zach Hepler, and Zach Johnson
Life in the Forest

The lion roars
The coyote laughs
The monkeys climb

All this comes in day
But a night
All is silent
Nothing stirs
Not even the birds

By Tae Soo Yoon, and Matthew Wells
These students used the gong, tambourine, and maracas in their orchestration.
SEASONS
Four Seasons

There are four seasons in a year
Summer, winter, spring, and fall.
In the winter, you wear gear
In the summer, birds are near.
In the spring you're having a ball.
In the fall the trees are tall.
Now you see,
If it wasn't clear
There are four reasons
For four seasons
In a year.

By Emma Coleman, Brita Mjos, Jennifer Oato, and Hannah Kreilkamp
Seasons

Winter, fail, summer, spring
Can you say this with a "ding"?

in winter it is very cold
You might have to be very BOLD

Summer can be very sweet
The birds sing out with a tweet!

Fall, the leaves fall to the ground
Will you buy a pastry for a pound?

in spring it can be wet,
So don't bother to make a bet.

By Brittni Giliam, Rebecca Muir, Michael Franklin, and Nancy Tcheou

These students used drums, violin, and bells to accompany their poem.
Winter Day

Here comes the sun
It's always fun
To play all day

Winter bright sky
Sun is shining
And melting snow

By Ms. Malecha's class and Mrs. Dennis
The Seasons

When the birds start chirping
You know it's that time
When spring is here

You know it is summer
When it starts to get hot
And you want to jump in the pool
By the next empty lot

Then the leaves start to fall
The birds stop their call
And it gets colder and colder

Then you see white
And it's darker in the night

And those are the seasons
Of the year

Spring
Summer
Fall
Winter

By Gaury Phadnis, Anouk Gevaert, Kalina McKee, and Kari Duame
Summer

The rooster crows
Day break is near
Creeks flow over smooth stones

Summer is finally here
Birds fly and sing sweet
Over the green grass
The flowers are in bloom

Winter is passed

By Jennifer Wooley, Kelley Coker, and Katrina Burgoyne
We Like...

We like the earth
We like the universe
We like the animals
And the people
We like ourselves
And we love our families

By Edson Myers
Water

Water trickling in a stream
So beautiful,
It's like a dream
Water deep with ocean spray
Glittering, sparkling all the day
Water flowing mile by mile
I watch
And see this all the while

By Larissa Kozisek, Liz Richardson, and Morgan Jessee
Reflections

You look at the water
The water looks back
You see your reflection
Shimmering bright

The water's bright colors
Stand out in the moonlight
You walk by the shore
Your reflection follows

You look at the water
The water looks back

By Christine Dawson, Jordan O'Connell, and Jenny Swann
Days and Nights

The sun shining on the Earth
Brings luck to all it touches

People smiling everywhere
When they see the sun
Kids going out
And having lots of fun

When it is dark,
The moon shining on the Earth
Makes beautiful music

By Ariel McGoldrick, Vanessa Foxglove, Robin Crowley, and Stephanie Seidel
The Horizon

Where the sky meets the water,
And the water meets the land.
It ends the sky,
And meets the sand.

When the sky turns orange
You can see it clear,
And the heat of the sun
Feels ever so near.

In the evening
When the moon shines bright
You can see the horizon’s mighty light.

By Claire Shaw, Kayla May, and Yinshi Lerman-Tan
Sakura

Cherry blossoms, like a bed
They come in pink and white and red
They grow on little trees
Let's go and see them
You and me.

You go grab them
Yes! You may!
They blow in the rice and the tea
Let's go and see them
Let's go see
The cherry blossoms look like little leaves
With slits in them.
You see?

Now I've told you all I can
Rest now like a little lamb.

By Kimberly suggs, Madeline Hill, Emily Black, and Tiffany Martinez

These students accompanied their poem with drums, gong, chimes, and choreography with Japanese costumes.
WEATHER
The Winter Storm

In the winter snow falls lightly
On the frozen ground.
Animals scurry to find a den,
While wind blows the snow
Into drifts.

Soon the sun breaks through the clouds
The birds sing and flitter around the trees
Knowing that the storm has passed.

By Brita Mjos, and Hannah Kreilkamp

These students accompanied their poem with triangles, cymbals, wind chimes and a slide whistle.
Wind of the Sea

The wind blows on the sea,
And lets your mind open free.
Softly blowing on the beach
Tickling palm trees that stand so neat.

By Maile Pacheco, and Julienne Kim

These students used wind chimes, bells, a drum, and a cabasa to accompany their poem.
Rain

The rain
Drip drop drip drop
Against the ground

The puddles from the rain
Splash splash splash splash

The rain on the dirt
Squish squish squish

By Lisa Arey, Katie Dickerson, and Adriana Karameti
Midnight

Midnight, midnight
It's night time now.
Trickle, trickle, it is raining.
Shhh...
The wind is hard.

By Ward Hurlburt, and Timothy Finger
Northern Lights

Northern lights
Oh so bright!
Gently dancing in the night
They make such a beautiful sight
Red, green, yellow, and blue light
When they dance they make no sound
While they quickly dance around

By Maggie Burgess, Sydnee Waggoner, and Clare Bryant

These students used rhythm instruments and a blue ribbon stick to accompany their poem.
Sky

I look up in the midnight sky,
And see the sparkling stars go by.
Oh, how I wish I could be near
Up with the sparkling stars up there

I look down in the sparkling lake
And see the reflection that it takes
From up in the sky.
I see the sparkling stars go by.

By Christian Swalling, Roksana Moazami, Megan Weems,
and Katie Hunt
The Super Nova

If you only knew...

A giant ball of energy
    Still and firm
Stable and consistent
    Begging to blow

At first just a rumble
And then it swelled
    Big and red

Can you believe it?
The death has begun

Can you believe it?
The death of the SUN!

By Tony Murrow, Alex Edwards, and Max Hunter

These students used drums, a bass xylophone, a ribbon stick, and special lighting effects to enhance their poem.
Blue is the Color

Blue is the color that hangs from the sky
Stars are the sparkles that shine through night
Nearby a child wishes upon a shooting star
The Earth rumbles by
It's beautiful, you know
But have you ever looked upon
The Big Dipper that shows?
The northern lights shine bright in the sky
Like rainbow colors that shine
Through the night.

By Lindsay Chambers, Megan Draeger, Salina Harwood, Aleka Maroulis, and Sarah Logo
The Glow

The moon shines bright
In the night sky
As the comet sails by,
The stars shape the Big Dipper.

As I slip into my slippers,
I look outside
To see the glow.

By Kary Kinder and Barbara Mossakowski
Bright Stars

As the northern lights shine bright
We are dancing with delight
As the wind blows
And the ocean flows
I make a wish while the stars are still bright.

By Taryn Tumacder, Kristy Childs, Sophie Blankensop, and Charlene Viray
Alien

I am an alien from the sky
I am saying "Hi"
My name is Frisco
And I love to disco!
I do that boogie day and night
Some people think
That the music is a fright!

By Bill Brooks, Cody Blume, John Reyla, and Bryan Earhart
Djembeat

Warm Circle
Djembe drum calls
Gun godo gun pa
Welcomes all who answer

Drummers circle
Listeners gather
Singers, players
Watchers, dancers

Magical circle
Djembe moves
All those around it
Enfolds us for a time

Drumming ends
Djembe at rest
The circle blends back into the day
Carries a little magic along with it

By Kelly Dennis
A BOOK OF SPARKS
For Chugach Optional

A collection of poetry on earth and space
Written by Chugach students
Edited by Kelly Dennis
Forward

The poems in this book were collected from work done as a part of music class during the 1997-98 school year. Students were given an assignment to write poetry using "noisy" and/or movement words, with the knowledge that later on they would be expected to enhance their poetry with musical sounds and/or choreography. The written works are mostly collaborative pieces that were done either in cooperative groups of students, or in collaboration with me, although some were done by students working alone. When the writing was completed, the students created orchestration and movement to bring their poetry to life. With a few of the pieces, I included the ideas that students came up with for instruments and movement to accompany their poems.

Kelly Dennis
Where Music is for Animals

Conga bears prowl
Cabasa constrictors crawl
Flexitone insects flitter all around

Slap stick crocodiles
Snapping in the air
Maraca rattlers
Ratchet frogs croaking everywhere

Glockenspiel mockingbirds
Vibraslap bees
Finger cymbal butterflies winging in the trees

Puili crickets, guiro goats
Metalophone fish
Here, music is for animals
any kind you wish.

It's really not the rainforest,
Or near the ocean floor,
It's just the plain old music room.
Come in!
And close the door!

By Kelly Dennis
A Special Place

The wind blowing
As the sun is setting at dusk.
The water
Going in and out with the tide.
A special place is in the mind
And only there you can find it.

By Sjok Durst
Quiet

Still, quiet, calm
Nestled in nooks,
Colors and sold,
Laughing,
Then drifting.
Waves come in,
Washing the colors,
The cold and still
Into the sea

By Alice Hurn
Intertidal Zones

Wet as the sea
Dry as the beach
Life like a marathon
Urban, cool
Lots of motels
Life is busy
Lots of money
Specifically sand dollars
Food a plenty
Shrimp for appetizers
Crab for the course
Oil covered rocks

By C. J. Meyer
Zoom

We zoom through space
And stop at the moon
Then we get up and float up like a balloon
We look down below and see a hoe
Aliens are making the moon rocks grow
Then we zoom down below
Where our home planet spins

By Cory Nielson, Avery Larsen, and John Kadarauch
Flying Birds

Flying, flying through the air
Flying, gliding without a care.
With the wind on their wings,
Sometimes you can hear them sing,
Watch them land,
Hear them squeak,
See them eating with their little beaks.

By Kimberlee Kogane, Alice Hurn, and Rhyannon Moore
Rain Forests

Vines wrapping 'round the trees
Birds flying in the breeze
The falling rain does not freeze
The wind is blowing all the leaves
  Slowly falling one by one,
Then down goes the darkening sun.

By Alia Parker, Sonnet Ziegahm, Nicole Finley, and Molly Hall
Always Awake

I walk in, my friends on my heels
   One gasps
   The others awe
   I don't blame them
   I feel it too
The rain forest's magic
   Touches us all
   We walk on
   Slowly
   Carefully under the vines
Beneath a giant kapok tree
   Boas slither to say "hello"
Some birds take flight
   A rainbow of colors
   Over head
   We stop when I feel
   The sun going down
   Stop
   In a clearing
   Animals all around
   Night is upon us
   We prepare to sleep
   But animal noises
   Keep us awake
   The song of a cricket
   Passes our ear
   An owl cry
   Makes us quiet
   Then a soft flow
There's a waterfall nearby
   It lulls us to sleep
   But the rain forest
   It's always awake

By Brittney Lovedahl
The Seven Sisters

The moon comes out at night
The stars are shining bright
The Seven Sisters come out to play
They run across the great night sky
Frightening planets as they fly by

By Caitlin Moore, Meghan Owens, Jennifer Szender, and Mallory Rice
The Night

As the night gets darker,
The dusk settles over the horizon.

As the stars twinkle
They form constellations
Over the dark night sky.

As the moon waves good-bye
The clouds take over the night.

By Kathryn Bockman, Sophie Shaddy-Farnsworth, Kari Miranda, and Lauren Peterson
Tundra

Rough, tough, freezing cold
Moss covering the shapeless, formless,
Uncontrollable,
Mystical land of the arctic in winter.
Gives shelter, food, and life
In the world of the arctic

By Curry Cunningham, Preston McWilliams, and Cale Jorgenson
The Stars Are Shining

The stars are shining brightly 
I see them in the sky 
They are glimmering like shining diamonds 
So you can see them if you walk by 

They are way up in our outer space 
I wish that I could fly 
So I could touch the stars 
That are way up in the sky 

By Molly Barker, Laurel Renkert, and Tana Nevada  
These students orchestrated their poem with the windchime, alto xylophone,  
gong and drum.
Moon Song

Did you know that the moon has a face
And spins around with so much grace?
In the night you can see the moon
In the sky while the sun is waving good-bye

In the night, you can see the moon glow
   It goes around real slow
   You will see the sun rise
   And when it goes down,
   You will get a big surprise!

By Caley Feeney, Kelinda Larson, Ruth Klein, and Shaylene Englishoe
Gigantic

I’m a gigantic meteorite
Surfing on the nebula of space
Skipping off Saturn’s rings
I circle the moon
And zing off its gravitational field
I shoot through the Earth’s atmosphere
I collide with Canada
And create the Hudson Bay

By Cayman Irvine, Russell Haering, and Anson Moxness
The Comet

The comet soars through space
At the speed of blinding light
   With a tail as bright
   As the sun at daylight
A sphere of rock and ice

By Aaron Cravez, Har Rai Khalsa, and Justin Hurst
These students used a hand drum, bass metalophone, windchime, and hushed dramatic reading to enhance their poem.
Stars

Stars are blue
Stars are red
Stars are in the night sky
Stars are all different shapes and sizes

By Curtis Penney, Brandon Gibbons, Joshua Reidell, and Steven Buklis
Constellations

Pises, Gemini, Leo
They shine at night, I see
They come and go
And make it glow
And that's all right with me

By Erin Haldane, and Lauren La Rose
Comet

A giant ball of ice
Orbiting away
Leaving an icy trail
Sometimes crashing and sometimes not
Finally ending at the sun

By David Hansen, David Parker, and Timothy Treuer
Guest

I look up to see the sloth
Hanging in freshly dewed leaves
There are many hidden animals in the rainforest
They all move at the same pace
All of them watching me
I am the foreigner
We fear each other

I walk and the wet dew
Cools my ankles
I stumble, floating to the ground
I am now faced with a king
Soft golden hair brushing against my face
Our eyes meet for a brief moment

I turn and walk home
I am their guest

By Catie Miller
Earth and Mars

Earth and Mars are just alike
They almost look like twins
Mars is peachy colored pink
Earth is blue and green

Earth is big and Mars is small
And that is all

By Olivia Parker-Mishler, Emily Owens, and Elizabeth Knapp
Check it Out

Mercury, Venus, Earth, and Mars
These are the Planets that are under the stars
Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus too
Don’t forget Pluto!
Check it out!
It’s space!
Check it out!
It’s space!

People think there are Martians on the moon
They may be green and they may be goons
But we like ’em
Check it out!
It’s space!
Check it out!
It’s space!

Stars are bright and very cool
They’re made of gas and
You learn about them in school
Check it out!
It’s space!
Check it out!
It’s space!
Check it out!

By Emily Cohn, Rebecca Duerre, Gabrielle Strawn, and Allison Stegman
These students read their poem rhythmically in a rap style and used maracas and the gong to orchestrate.
Djembeat

Warm circle
Djembe calls
Gun godo gun pa
Welcomes all who answer

Drummers circle
Listeners gather
Singers, players
Watchers, dancers

Magical circle
Djembe moves
All those around it
Enfolds us for a time

Drumming ends
Djembe at rest
The circle blends back into the day
Carries a little magic along with it

By Kelly Dennis