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Can You See Yourself in My Classroom? Programming Folk Traditions Into the Elementary Music Setting

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Can You See Yourself in My Classroom? Programming Folk Traditions Into the
Elementary Music Setting

by

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A capstone project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Education.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong? The answer is simple but yet involved. I believe the answer boils down to: teach the songs, dances, chants, and folklore from the various cultures that my students represent. Our world is growing ever more connected, and it is imperative that students are aware of other cultures to create a lasting connection that will go past their elementary music experience. In this chapter, I highlight my journey to my research topic, the personal significance, and how this will benefit my students, the school, the community, and the profession.

My Journey

My journey to this research project started in December 2021. My students and I were starting to come out of all of the COVID protocols in my school district. As a music department, we were not sure about having grade-wide performances. I noticed that my students really wanted to perform, so I used Winter/Christmas themed music for all 25 sections of students to perform. Each individual section chose the tune that they would sing, choreograph, record, and ultimately share with the entire school during their Winter Parties via YouTube.

One of my sections chose to do Feliz Navidad and chose to have the Mexican flag as a prop for their performance. I started to hang props and backdrops along the outside walls of my classroom. I hung the Mexican flag and noticed that students, particularly my

younger Latinx students, would come into my room and either have a verbal response of excitement or would just go and hug the flag with excitement. I realized that this brought joy to those kids to be represented.

Fast forward to December 2022, the video recordings were no longer needed now that my grade-wide concerts were back in place and we could perform live. Looking at the curriculum I noticed that we were highlighting Hanukkah and Christmas the entire month of December grades K-5. I started to look at my students and think about the entire scope and sequence of my curriculum and how it fails to represent a number of my students. To address this, I started to ask at the beginning of each month what traditions students celebrated at home and I would write them on my calendar at the front of the room. My goal with this capstone project is to use several of the traditions my students and I added to the calendar last year and implement them into my teaching through research, connecting with people who are from these traditions, and through my students. The calendar project led me to my research question of *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?*

Personal Significance

During this discovery in 2022, as someone who is entrusted to teach all students, I discovered how much I would gain in relationships and knowledge if I would start to explore beyond the standard Eurocentric curriculum that is prescribed. I started to reflect on my personal upbringing and what I bring to the table. There are times that I do talk

about my childhood to my students. In the school district I work at now, most probably could not imagine having a childhood like mine. I grew up on dirt roads between farms. We had 20+ barn cats, two indoor cats, three dogs, and two horses. I spent minimal time on the computer, and we did not play video games. Pokemon was of the devil along with Harry Potter, and I spent most of my time outdoors. I grew up in the church and was an active member of the youth group. I have taken a few mission trips to Jamaica, Mexico, and Haiti. My upbringing was rather conservative, and I would consider myself a solid moderate. I am still an active member at my local church.

As a youth I was often chosen to be the “judge” during social studies or civics lessons by several teachers. I do pretty well being in the middle. In my entire K-12 experience, there were maybe two students who were Black, my neighborhood was farmers and one family that was Native American. The only time we spoke to our neighbors was to exchange chores when families were taking vacations. I was pretty isolated from other cultures and the few things I did learn were probably from outdated social studies books.

It was pretty jarring for me to move from the country road down to Augsburg College for my undergraduate degree. I had a pretty conservative upbringing and the main reason I chose Augsburg was because there was a direct relationship to the community college that I went to. I signed up to go not really knowing what I was doing. I am the first in my family to go to a four-year institution. Augsburg welcomes everyone, no matter one’s culture, background, or orientation. My childhood was not diverse and people’s backgrounds or orientations were not openly discussed. In contrast, the

conversations of background and orientations were a part of everyday life at Augsburg and those conversations definitely stretched my worldview.

If only I had the opportunity to learn about other cultures as a kid, I wonder what my worldview would be like. I notice the ratio of diversity is quite higher in my current school setting than I ever experienced. I believe that when we learn from one another as children, we are more likely to be accepting of others as we grow into adults. This reasoning is another driving force behind my project. I want kids to learn the things that I did not have the opportunity to learn to increase an openness to things that may be different from one's worldview.

Student Significance

The idea of being the gatekeeper to a student's first and possibly last academic music experience is very important to me. As the primary music teacher in my building, I hold the responsibility of what instruction will be taught to 600-700 students. If I am limiting students to Eurocentric experiences, they are not learning about the world around them nor are students from other parts of the world able to share their experiences or knowledge. Henninger (2018) outlined that research has shown, when students learn about music from other cultures they learn to be more respectful and accepting of others (para 7).

I noticed this in action last year around Easter. I had not started directly teaching music things yet, but the concept of being more respectful and accepting was evident in my students (Henninger, 2018, para. 7). As a student body, some students were practicing fasting for Lent while others were fasting for Ramadan. I had asked one of the students

who was participating in Ramadan how the fasting was going, and I had a student who is Catholic chime in quite quickly. “Wait! I am fasting too! I can’t have any sweets until Easter!” It was a neat moment that my students were able to see that even though they practice different traditions, they are doing similar actions.

Henninger (2018) went on to talk about how when students are of a younger age they are more receptive to “new musics.” The idea of new musics is music from around the world. When students are exposed to this type of music, it is best to couple the musical experience with a discussion of interesting items from the culture that we are working with. This shows me that students will gain contextual knowledge of why we are doing what we are doing.

The idea of windows and mirrors was taught to me in my Orff Schulwerk levels. Sarrazin (2016) describes Orff Schulwerk as a method of teaching music to children; through this method students sing, say, play and dance. Students learn through imitation, exploration, improvisation, and composition. Students see themselves and their identities in a mirror or the music they are used to ingesting and students can see others through a window. Jackson (2023) outlined the idea of a sliding glass door in their writing about literature. I believe that this can similarly be applied to music as well, Bishop (as cited in Jackson 2023) stated “Sliding glass doors provide readers and/or listeners with the chance to enter the story and temporarily become part of that identity” (p. 55). I am hoping if students are actively engaged in the tradition or creation of music from various cultures, they will be able to step through the sliding glass door and become an active participant rather than an observer.

School Significance

I teach K-5 music in an elementary school in the North Metro of Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) shows enrollment at 666 students. Our school features a gifted and talented program for grades 3-5 called Odyssey. The students who are enrolled in this program have extremely high test scores along with high cogAT scores¹. Our school district consists of five elementary buildings so when kids qualify, they leave their original elementary school within the district and are bused to our campus. Families have the option to enroll their children in this program, not all families opt into Odyssey. This particular group of students is incredibly intelligent, they are working with material a grade or two above grade level. Our district had started to provide busing to anyone in our district who qualifies for this program a couple of years ago. Prior to the busing, if a student qualified for this program their parents had to bring them to our building. I have noticed a growth in diversity since busing has become an option for these students.

One of our school district's initiatives is to create an equitable experience for all learners. If we are only learning about music from white people and white people's traditions we are not equitably serving the community as a whole. It is the job of the school and school district to create lifelong learners and that needs to expand beyond just the books that we read but into the human relationships that are built.

¹ cogAT tests assess general abstract reasoning abilities, the application of reasoning to verbal, quantitative, and non verbal tasks.

Community Significance

The population of the community that I serve is a reflection of the 85% of students that are white. The music that I primarily work with reflects the majority of my community and the traditions that would be passed down. According to the MN Demographic Center (2023),

The most common ancestries (reflecting family or generational ties, regardless of one's birthplace) reported by Minnesotans in 2018 were German (1,801,700 people), Norwegian (810,300 people), Irish (516,500 people), Swedish (429,800 people), English (290,200 people), and Polish (248,000 people). About 58,800 Minnesotans reported Somali ancestry in 2018. Many Minnesotans do not report ancestry or simply report "American." (para 4)

However, the MN Demographic Center (2023) also reported,

Between 2010 and 2018, the fastest growing racial group in Minnesota was the Black or African American population, which grew by 36%, adding more than 96,500 people. Second fastest was the Asian population, which grew by 32%, adding 69,800 people, followed by the Hispanic or Latin(x) population, which grew by 24%, adding 59,000 people. (para 3)

When researching the demographics, I notice they match what I thought I was experiencing. I have been experiencing an upward trend of diversity in my current setting, and it means that the community is also growing in diversity. As a music educator in the state in which I teach, I need to start to diversify what I am teaching my

students because the population is growing more diverse and students have an opportunity to learn about others who are different from themselves.

Professional Significance

The National Center for Education Statistics (2020-21) reported that in the elementary setting 89% of the teachers are female and 80% of the teachers in education are white (figure 1). This statistic informs me that students of color have a low percentage of seeing someone who looks like them actually teach them. The diversity in sex and race does not reflect the students that are in our buildings and will contribute to the experience that they have.

The curriculum that is generally taught in most elementary music settings has an emphasis on Western music. My time earning my bachelor's degree was spent on studying Western music only, and my music theory classes were based on Western music theory; we were taught how to teach students using this type of theory as if it was most important or valid. Shaw (2012) found this approach to be problematic and discussed teaching a Gospel piece to a group of students. It would be inappropriate to use the theoretical teaching scaffolding when culturally, Gospel music is taught aurally (p.78). I did not receive this type of training in my undergraduate years and as I write this paper, a new program is starting to be offered at the University of Saint Thomas in Diverse Music. I believe the timing of this demonstrates that access to diverse music is no longer a want, but it is a need in our public school setting.

The National Center for Education Statistics (2017-18) reported, "At the same time, in schools where the majority of students were not White, the majority of teachers

tended to be White” (figure 2). I believe the reason why we are not seeing much diversity in the elementary music experiences is because the diversity in the teachers themselves is not very diverse. The training that one receives in college is Eurocentric and in my experience does not touch on diverse music, so the same music that white educators know gets passed down to whoever is sitting in front of them.

We are currently in a time as a country where it is imperative that as educators we start to diversify what we are teaching to our students. Our student bodies are diverse and the knowledge that they bring to the table is valid.

Summary

My research question is *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* In Chapter One, I have provided background information, context, and I have identified cultural changes that are taking place in MN, creating a need to diversify what is happening in my classroom.

As I move forward to my next chapter, I will be looking to and learning from what the experts have to say about diversifying the experiences that my students will encounter on a day to day basis. I feel that the sky is the limit when it comes to learning about how to connect with students, their families, trusted sources, and ultimately the implementation of the music that reflects the students that are in front of me. I am excited to see how the research done in the next chapter will help shape how I interact with my students during the time of working on this project. In my literature review, I focus on

the history of music education, culturally responsive teaching, how to present diverse materials with authenticity, and how to avoid cultural appropriation. In Chapter Three, I describe the project and rationale behind it. In Chapter Four, I share the final outcomes of my project.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

In chapter two, I explore what the literature has to say about incorporating different cultures into my classroom. This will be examined through the lens of the history of music education in the United States, culturally responsive teaching, shaping world perspectives, cultural appropriation and authentically presenting music to students, and touching on how to acquire songs, stories, dances and culture bearers. These subtopics all support the burning question of *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* The purpose of my capstone work is to help students see themselves in my music classroom and for students to learn about cultures other than their own.

Historical Background

Music has been around since humans have been around. There is a drive in each and every one of us to want to put pitches together and make sense of them. Leonhard and House (1959) stated “No human society has been found which has not practiced the art of music and music education” (p. 40). This tells us that music has been around for a very long time and we can see that it serves a purpose for a plethora of things such as celebrations, rituals, cultural festivities, religious functions, concerts, sporting events, entertainment, parades and nationalism. The literature will inform us of the practice that has influenced most of the curriculum that is currently used.

Classical Era

Greek societies had built their education system upon music and gymnastics. Leonhard and House (1959) wrote “music is for the soul and gymnastics were prescribed for the body” (pp. 41-42). The objective of education had taken a shift; it was important to build citizens of character, stamina, and grace. The famous Greek philosopher Plato believed that music could promote virtue and graciousness. Eventually Greek music education had started to look a little like what secondary performance ensembles look like today. Music contests and festivals started to be created, concert societies and artist unions were formed (Leonhard & House, 1959, pp. 42-43).

Music In the Middle Ages

Christians were known to resist the pagan educational system until the Church assumed control over education. In the sixth century, there were five music books that served to direct the instruction of music in the cathedrals and monastery schools. The approach to teaching music was a little bit different, being that music was taught through a scientific standpoint. It did not require any understanding of live music or the skill to perform it (Leonhard & House, pp.43-44). Moving into the eleventh century, the scientific standpoint of teaching was obsolete and the texts were revised and condensed. Music became a vital aspect of the mass, and schools for choristers were called “scholae cantorum” (singing schools) (Leonard & House, 1959, pp. 43-44).

At this time, if one was not a part of what was happening in the cathedrals, music was passed down by relationship. Fathers would teach their sons and members of troupes

would teach other members. There was a rise of secular groups called “troubadours and trouvères” (Leonard & House, 1959, pp. 43-44).

Music in the Renaissance

Music had started to become exclusive to the upper echelon of the religious elite because of the power churches held in the Middle Ages. This exclusivity led up to the famous 95 theses that Martin Luther had pinned to the church door in Wittenberg (Leonard & House, 1959). During this time the printing press had come onto the scene and seven years after, the first Protestant hymn book was published. Composers had started to write more music for educational purposes. This time period had a huge increase in amateur art and production of a huge variety of music for madrigal groups which are similar to small chamber groups that are taught today. The most widespread system of music education was happening in the musicians' guilds. Many musicians were apprentices, and while apprenticing their “schooling” morphed into a day job (Leonard & House, 1959, p. 45).

Beginnings in the United States

When the early colonists had originally come over to the United States, they were basically starting from scratch. There were no large churches, choir masters, or people to train who could become professional musicians. The focus tended to be on survival and things that were related to that. Music was still around, but it was not a focus (Leonard & House, 1959). In 1700, the Episcopal Church of Port Royal Virginia, imported a pipe organ. In 1712, Reverend John Tufts published the first practical instruction book in singing. Not long after this publication many churches started to take steps toward

singing “by rule or art,” that was the name for music reading. The better singers in the congregations would sit together and eventually formed themselves into choirs (Leonhard & House, 1959, pp. 49-50).

Singing Schools

Singing schools originated in attempts to establish and improve these choirs. These schools became present in New England around 1720 and the idea had moved throughout the colonies. The job included school as a part time job, sessions for learning at night in their home, church, or school room for a modest fee (Leonhard & House, 1959, pp. 49-50).

A century later, all of these grassroots efforts started to flourish. There was an increasingly large amount of musical activity happening. In 1752, an orchestra was employed in the production of the Beggar's Opera in Maryland (Leonhard & House, 1959). A symphony society was formed in New York in the nineteenth century and the Handel and Haydn Society of Boston was founded in 1815. These larger groups had only inspired a bigger step towards the singing schools, conventions, festivals, and instruction based on working together to produce music (Leonhard & House, 1959, p. 50). These actions are the beginnings of the curriculum that is in public school music education.

In the early 1800's Lowell Mason started to teach his own singing school at age 15. He was an instrumentalist and at age 16 he was directing his own band. When Lowell was on the music scene in his early years, he had not intended on staying in music. He had moved from Massachusetts to Georgia and became a retail merchandiser and also a banker. His first years in Savannah, he had taken some music side jobs in order to “eke

out a living.” Eventually, his business pursuits took off and he was living comfortably. In the summer of 1827 Mason was 35, and had moved back to Boston where he was working for a bank, directed church choirs, and led the Boston Haydn and Handel Society. He began to teach vocal music in churches, private schools, and singing schools. He was so busy with music, it had become his full time job. Boston Public Schools accepted curricular vocal music in 1838. This is significant because this is the first recorded public school program. Mason worked at a public school for one year without pay to prove that children could learn to read music and sing (Pemberton, 1992).

Pestalozzi Influences on Music Education

Music was the first subject of the “non academic type” to achieve full public school status. Lowell Mason had traveled over to Europe to learn about an approach to teaching named after Pestalozzi who was a Swiss education reformer. This system placed distinction on real knowledge vs. book knowledge. This method of teaching was not explicit to music, however the method adopted for music is called “Principles of the Pestalozzian System of Music.” (Leonard & House, 1959 p. 53). Mason was a huge advocate for this system and was a close friend to Horace Mann. Because of this friendship, Mason was able to lecture and train other teachers in various schools (Leonhard & House, 1959, p. 53).

Hall (1981) studied the influence of Pestalozzi in Music Education. The Pestalozzi Method is similar to the methods that practitioners use in music education today (this will be compared in the coming paragraphs). This method had a huge

influence on Horace Mann and Mason Lowell. The Pestalozzi Method is as follows (as cited in Hall, 1981):

1. To teach sounds before signs and make the child learn to sing before he learns the written notes or their names.
2. To lead him to observe by hearing and imitating sounds, their resemblances and differences, their agreeable and disagreeable effect, instead of explaining these things to him– in a word, to make him active instead of passive learning;
3. To teach but one thing at a time– rhythm, melody, and expression to be taught and practiced separately, before the child is called to the difficult task of attending to all at once;
4. In making him practice each step of these divisions, until he is master of it before passing to the next;
5. In giving the principles and theory after the practice, and as induction from it;
6. In analyzing the practicing the elements of articulate sound in order to apply them to music, and;
7. In having the names of the notes correspond to those used in music (p.10)

Hall (1981) noted that Horace Mann was a reformer of the public school system in the United States (p. 12) and as previously stated by Leonard and House (1959), the text of the curriculum would often be religious in nature (pp. 49-50). Horace Mann believed that schools need to be universal, be paid for by the taxes of the public, embrace

everyone no matter their background, be free from religious influence, and provide education by well trained teachers (Cremin, 2023). Horace Mann's contributions to public education are still very much in place even today.

History of Music Education Conclusion

One can see that the history of Music Education has a strong foundation. I appreciate the advocacy that Horace Mann had for public school education. Mann was advocating for what I am asking. *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* I would like to transition to the methods that are currently implemented to teach elementary music in most public school settings.

Current Elementary Methods

I will be comparing the methods of Orff Schulwerk, Zoltán Kodály, and Émile-Jacques Dalcroze; the reasoning behind the comparison of these methods in particular is because there are pieces of each of these pedagogies in whatever standard curriculum is taught in most public schools. Sarrazin (2016) wrote that these methods “are time tested and contain well-practiced and research techniques for teaching music (p. 67). Sarrazin (2016) continued to say that all these methods have similarities in the following ways:

1. They are systematic and sequential in design;
2. Utilize music with authenticity and integrity; such as folk music;

3. Are based on incorporating the “mother-tongue” approach to rhythm pitch and timbre from the child’s perspective, innate behaviors and how interaction with their natural environment; and
4. Encourage active engagement with the student (p. 68)

In reading Sarrazin (2016) I am noticing strong similarities to the Pestalozzi Method that Lowell encountered in Switzerland (Hall, 1981). The coming philosophies all come from the same region on the map which leads me to think that the Pestalozzi Method was far reaching.

Carl Orff Philosophy

The Orff Schulwerk philosophy operates through creative thinking and student improvisation (Sarrazin 2016). Orff (as cited in Sarrazin, 2016) stated,

Since the beginning of time, children have not liked to study. They would much rather play, and if you have their best interests at heart, you will let them learn while they play; they will find that what they have mastered is child’s play. (p. 68)

The method combines the use of instruments, singing, movement, and speech. Students can use these media in the following stages of teaching: Imitation, exploration, improvisation, and composition (Sarrazin, 2016). Parts of this method echo Pestalozzi pedagogy with sounds before signs, imitation, giving the principles and theory after the practice (as cited in Hall, 1981, p.10). Sarrazin (2016) wrote:

Orff Schulwerk utilizes children’s natural behaviors of play—experimenting, improvising— to access children’s innate musicality. Schulwerk uses the native

language, sounds, timbre, rhythms, melodies, and tonal material surrounding the child, particularly in its folk music repertoire. (p. 69)

When Carl Orff was creating the Schulwerk there were few instruments that were available and accessible for children to use. He started to gather recorders as they are a smaller inexpensive instrument for children to play. Orff encountered an African xylophone and modified it into a smaller instrument that school children can play. From gamelan music in Indonesia, he developed the idea of metallophones and from Germany, he developed the glockenspiels. Sarrazin (2016), discussed when creating music with these instruments, students are often using speech first, then transferring the syllables of the speech to one's body through body percussion, and the syllables will be applied to the instrument to create the music. This is a beautiful thing because it implements “using the mother tongue” (Sarrazin, p. 68). This creates many avenues for the teacher to explore different languages and traditions while applying the method of Orff Schulwerk (Sarrazin 2016).

Zoltán Kodály Philosophy

Zoltán Kodály firmly believed that every child should be a good singer and have an opportunity to receive an education to become one. Kodály (as cited by Sarrazin 2016) wrote:

It is a long accepted truth that singing provides the best start to music education; moreover, children should learn to read music before they are provided with any instrument... Even the most talented artist can never overcome the disadvantages of an education without singing. (p. 84)

Zoltán Kodály was a Hungarian composer and ethnomusicologist. What is noteworthy about Kodály is that he collected folk songs from Hungary and when this method is used in the US, American folk songs are used. There is a “Song Web” link in the online version of Sarrazin’s book “Music and the Child” that brings educators to folk songs from around the world and gives direction on how to teach the various folk songs (Sarrazin, 2016, p. 88).

Kodály was appalled that children could not sing well and was appalled by the literature that teachers were implementing to teach kids how to sing. He focused on authentic folk music and composed music to teach to kids. Kodály did not create the hand signing system that kids use, rather modified the established hand signing system for singing. The system is known as the Curwen Solfege hand signs. These signs help students sing the correct pitches (Sarrazin 2016).

Émile Jacques-Dalcroze Philosophy

Sarrazin (2016) reported, “Dalcroze believed that every musician should strive to be sensitive and expressive, and to express music through purposeful movement, sound, thought, feeling, and creativity” (p. 91). When working with students, educators are working with music through movement with students. The idea is the educator is using singing, improvisation, and eurhythmics (body movement) together to create a deeper understanding of what is being created. All of these items do not have to be implemented at the same time (Sarrazin 2016). Sarrazin (2016) wrote: “Eurhythmics is used to teach rhythms, structure and music expression through music (p. 91). Music is generally always moving. When one thinks of even a note being sustained for a long time,

something is moving to keep that note sustained, be it wind, air, or vibration. Dalcorze captured this and applied it to the movement of children.

Current Elementary Methods Conclusion

In comparing the early foundations to music education to current practice, there are many similarities that prevail. There are systematic methods implemented, they are focused on the native tongue, encourage active music making, and use folk music (Hall, Leonard & House, Sarrazin, 2016). All of these methods serve as the foundation for a case for an educator to help students see themselves in the music that is being created and the dances that are being danced. These are steps that could help students feel like they belong. In my next section, I would like to demonstrate how culturally responsive teaching will help answer my question of *“Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?”*

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy/Responsive Teaching

At the onset of the project, I thought to myself that I need to teach to the students that are sitting in front of me. This seemed like a logical response to answer my question if students saw themselves represented in my classroom. I remember initially interviewing for a different position in the district in which I am currently working and they had asked me if I was familiar with culturally responsive teaching. I did my best to answer the question, but was very honest and said I had a lot of opportunities for growth. The literature in this section will define what culturally responsive teaching is and how it can be applied to the music classroom, so students can see themselves in the curriculum

that is delivered and help give answers to my question of *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?*

Najarro and Will (2018) discussed three different terms in their article for Education Week. The terms discussed are culturally responsive pedagogy, culturally responsive teaching and culturally relevant pedagogy. While all three of these approaches vary in their components, all three center their teaching around the knowledge that people who are marginalized already have. Empowering not just the learner that is marginalized but further expanding knowledge for all learners. (para 1).

“Culturally responsive teaching means using students’ customs, characteristics, experience, and perspectives as tools for better classroom instruction” (Navarro and Will, 2018, para. 5). Gay (as cited in Navarro and Will 2018) wrote:

when academic knowledge and skills are situated within the lived experiences and frames of reference for students, they are more personally meaningful, have higher interest appeal, and are learned more easily and thoroughly (para 6).

Gay (2000) discussed in *Culturally Responsive Teaching: theory, research, and practice* that this style of teaching emerged from the 1970’s. Educators were starting to notice that there was a learning gap between students of color and students who were white. Gay (2000) cited researchers Abrahams and Troike (1972) who argued, “that if racial minority students are being taught effectively, teachers must learn wherein their

cultural differences lie... and capitalize upon them as a resource, rather than.. disregarding the differences.. [and] thereby denigrating... the students” (p. 26). Gay (2000) continued to discuss that educators need to evaluate their own perspective of the world. Educators need to take the time to consider “their own cultural attitudes, assumptions, mechanisms, rules and regulations that have made it difficult for them to teach these children successfully” (p. 26).

Characteristics of Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)

The literature in this section will define what culturally responsive teaching is and how it can be applied to the music classroom, so students can see themselves in the curriculum that is delivered. Gay (2000) laid out seven characteristics of CRT: it is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory and it is personified (pp. 29-36). These characteristics are not just present in the traditional homeroom classroom but can also be applied to a child’s general music education. I will use Gay’s research to define the characteristics, but look at each characteristic through the lens of someone who has applied this research into the music setting. This will help me answer *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?*

CRT is Validating

Gay (2000) wrote that CRT is validating because it acknowledges all that are in the room and the idea that knowledge brought to the table is valid. Students have experiences at home that are meaningful and can be bridged into the classroom. This

provides an opportunity for students to know and be able to celebrate their own heritage (p. 29).

Shaw (2012) discussed CRT in the choral setting, but this can be applied to general music as well. When a teacher is selecting repertoire for performance or for study one needs to consider the students that are sitting in the classroom. Shaw (2012) uses Gay's definition to guide how repertoire is selected by asking the following questions:

What music would build on my students' prior experiences? What pieces would capitalize on their cultural knowledge? What selections could my students experience through their preferred learning styles? Which would showcase their culturally informed performance styles? Instead of thinking of culture as something distant and removed, one way that culturally responsive teachers can attend to the culture in their own classroom is by including the repertoire that honors their own student's cultural heritage. (p. 76)

When an educator takes the time to intentionally pick the responsive repertoire (or in my case everyday songs), they are validating students' backgrounds, they are creating space for students to cultivate cultural competence and grow in understanding and respect for their cultural heritage (Shaw, 2012, p. 79). Shaw (2012) proposed a Multiyear Culturally Responsive Curriculum that was based off of a three year curriculum cycle.

The idea is in the shape of a spiral pointing upwards. Each year the target is for culture validation of students' own cultures; the idea is that the teacher would pick two cultures to highlight in that year, then the next year another two, and the same in the following years. Shaw also implements ideas from educator John Dewey. Dewey (as

cited in Shaw 2012) wrote, “‘Thoughtful valuation,’ refers to mediation and criticism of experience, reflects an ultimate aim of culturally responsive teaching” (p. 79). Students should have many in depth experiences with music, not just being exposed to it, but they learn to value the music with a sense of social responsibility. The curricular spiral as suggested by Shaw would allow students to have many meaningful experiences to be able to compare, contrast and ultimately connect through cultural validation (Bond, 2014; Shaw, 2012, p. 79).

Comprehensive CRT

The music classroom is a place that is comprehensive. It is a space where students are working together as one unit. There are many students involved in the creation of music but we produce one sound (Bond 2014, Gay 2000). Gay (2000) discussed CRT as comprehensive:

Along with improving academic achievement, comprehensive approaches to teaching are committed to helping students of color maintain identity and connections with their ethnic groups and communities; develop a sense of community, camaraderie, and shared responsibility; and acquire an ethic of success. Expectations and skills are not taught as separate entities but are woven together into an integrated whole that permeates all curriculum content and the entire modus operandi of the classroom. Students are held accountable for each others' learning as well as their own. They are expected to internalize the value that learning is a communal, reciprocal, interdependent affair, and manifest it habitually in their expressive behaviors. (p. 30)

When students are creating a piece of music together or dancing together they are often moving as one unit. Students are relying on one another often without being able to communicate with one another through speech. This requires everyone to have an understanding that each contribution no matter how big or small is valid. Bond (2014) discussed teachers having a sense of community and high expectations for all. When one is working on a piece of music all individual voices, instruments, movements etc, will come together as one. There are times when students will not all get there on the same path. Some may require differentiation and that is okay. Students and instructors understand that there is not “one way of knowing,” nor are instructors the holders of all the correct/final answers (p. 14).

Culturally Responsive Teaching is Multidimensional

Meet and expand. For music to be multidimensional for my students I need to meet my students where they are at, have a safe space in my classroom to have strong relationships with students. Where there is trust, I will be able to meet students where they are at, teach about something they may not know and expand their learning (Gay 2000).

Gay (2000) wrote, “Multidimensional culturally responsive teaching encompassess curriculum content, learning context, classroom climate, student-teacher relationships, instructional techniques, and performance assessments” (p. 31). Shaw (2012) broadened this for the music context by asserting that when teachers are teaching about a certain culture they are not limiting students to only learning about that specific culture. They are in fact influencing cultural diversity through multiple perspectives. One

culture may be the central focus while other cultures are being broadened at the same time.

Bond (2014) expressed the idea that music can not be presented in isolation from its social and political context. It is important while discussing the music we are engaging the students about its functions in society. It is important to push past the note names or any rhythms that we are getting at as educators because this is where students are able to confront their own beliefs or other's assumptions about music. We all tend to have our biases or what seems natural or a universal understanding of music, and it isn't actually natural or a universal understanding (p. 12).

Culturally Responsive Teaching is Empowering

The music classroom is a place where mistakes are welcomed and students feel empowered to take safe risks. Students need to know that their instructor sees and knows them (Tietz and Gay 2000).

Tietz (2019) stated,

The very nature of the Orff Schulwerk approach allows us to teach far beyond our subject matter and develop the humanity of the students whom we interact with.

Focussing on a nurturing environment in which students feel safe, loved, and important is one key to empowering them and ourselves, to make a difference in the world. (p. 22)

Gay (2000) discussed that this type of education creates an environment where students can become better human beings and more successful learners. Teachers set up their lessons in a way that students are willing to take safe risks within the classroom

because they believe that their instructor believes in their ability to achieve great things (p. 32). Tietz (2019) outlined creating a space for students to feel safe. When students feel safe, they are empowered to take risks in our classrooms. Orff Schulwerk has created several spaces for students to express themselves. Students are given specific scaffolding to create and share their own musical improvisations (pp. 22-27).

It is important for students to understand being brave and trying is the goal in and of itself. For every improvisation shared, it is valuable to say “thank you” to the student regardless of musical prowess. This is not a judgment or a reflection on the caliber of what was shared, but gratitude for the gift of taking a chance. (Tietz, 2019, pp. 23-24)

It is through opportunities like this that students recognize that their teacher is grateful for them as a human, their contributions, and also that they believe in them (Tietz, 2019, pp. 22-27).

Culturally Responsive Teaching Is Transformative

Gay (2000) stated,

CRT defies conventions of traditional educational practices with respect to ethnic students of color. This is done in several ways. It is very explicit about respecting the cultures and experience of African American, Native American, Latina, and Asian American students, and it uses these as worthwhile resources for teaching and learning. It recognizes the existing strengths and accomplishments of these students and then enhances them further in the instructional process. (p. 33)

Shaw (2012) discussed a scenario of having African American students who have grown up singing in a church choir. The teacher may choose to teach a gospel piece of literature to a choir, but it is important to note that it would be inappropriate to have students looking at scores and sight singing with solfege² as it is culturally taught by rote. This would also take away from someone who has traditionally been raised in an African American church. If students are just reading from the score and sight singing they are missing out on the whole cultural piece of learning gospel tunes. Shaw noted that the situation outlined is a hypothetical situation and that there are indeed gospel singers who do work with written notation (p. 78).

Shaw (2012) outlined how one should choose whether to teach the music aurally or from notation. “It is determined by these two factors: the learning styles of the individuals being taught and the manner in which the music would be taught and learned in the culture or its origin” (p. 78). It is important for instructors to understand that learning music aurally is just as valid as sight singing or reading when it is appropriate. “Teaching students aurally can provide opportunities for some students to use their preferred learning modality and will strengthen the overall musicianship of all singers” (Shaw, 2012, p. 78).

Culturally Responsive Teaching is Emancipatory

Gay (2000) outlined, CRP liberates students. It is liberating because students have the ability to learn many ways. This was captured through Shaw (2012) when they described the way of learning gospel music. It is an aural tradition, not a sit and read the

² Solfege is a musical system that gives a unique syllable and hand sign for pitches on the music staff.

music solfege situation that music often confines musicians to. Gay (2000) discussed, “central to this kind of teaching is making authentic knowledge about different ethnic groups accessible to students. The validation, information, and pride it generates are both psychologically and intellectually liberating” (p. 35).

Orff Schulwerk in many ways can be seen as a liberating way to experience music. It is not assigned to any specific musics or culture. Sarrazin (2016) wrote:

Orff Schulwerk utilizes children’s natural behaviors of play– experimenting, improvising– to access children’s innate musicality. Schulwerk uses the native language, sounds, timbres, rhythms and tonal material surrounding the child, particularly in its folk music repertoire (p. 69).

The method of sing, say, play, and dance can be applied so all students can express themselves. It creates a space for students to be able to experience music first and analyze second. It emphasizes that all are participants and not just listeners. Everyone’s voice counts and it can be heard through the improvisations that are created by participants. This can be freeing because this makes the music incredibly personal (Sarrazin 2016, pp. 58-59).

In conclusion, when students receive culturally responsive teaching they are being seen. The teacher takes the time to ensure that lessons are validating, empowering, comprehensive, and multidimensional which then frees up students to have a voice in what they are creating and learning. This helps students feel seen and heard. In my next theme I would like to explore how as an educator we are charged to shape our learner’s perspectives of the world.

Shaping World Perspectives

As I have become a mother, I am reminded everyday of the importance of reading to my son. I know from my musical training that it is important that I read often and read with a cadence to help develop the cadence of a steady beat within my son. This is similar to the opportunities that teachers are afforded. Jackson (2023) discussed that similarly to a mother reading books to her child, educators pick curriculum. “However, often there are missed opportunities in which diversity is not the point but showcase much needed representation” (p. 54). The idea is to be intentional about the characters and content of the curriculum that one is presenting. When one is intentional, even with the small choices of say a person of color as the main character, one is creating space for windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors (Jackson, 2023, p. 55).

Jackson (2023) wrote about the selection of children’s books and diverse representation to validate student’s experiences and also to expose students who are white to explore cultures other than their own. When researching mirrors, windows and sliding glass doors, I primarily came across articles about books. I would like to apply this idea to the selection of what is covered in my classroom setting. When discussing the idea of literature, I am looking at it through the lens of music.

“Mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors all provide unique opportunities for teachers to promote a positive classroom community by validating and celebrating the lived experiences of every single student in their classroom” (Jackson, 2023, p. 55). Jackson outlined the importance for communities that are predominantly white, it is important to put to work the use of windows, mirrors and sliding glass doors.

Bishop (as cited in Jackson 2023) wrote: “Mirrors are stories that reflect an individual’s personal identity, including racial, ethnic, cultural, gender, religious, and sexual identities” (p. 55). The stories that are considered to be mirrors validate the reader by showing them that they belong and that they are seen.

“Windows are stories that offer readers and/or listeners a view into the experience of individuals who are different from them in various identities” (Jackson, 2023, p. 55). Students look out from their own experiences and learn about different holidays, cultures, and traditions. I would argue that some of the Indigenous Music would fall into this category because it may be only for that specific tribe or performed by certain members of the tribe (Barden, 2020). Jaakola (as cited in Barden, 2020) noted, “the act of making sound is sacred, singing and dancing is often prayerful, songs and dances can be medicine or healing, musical instruments have spirit when awakened, and sometimes making music is just for entertainment.” (p. 2) Students get to listen or watch music being performed in this facet but not get to experience creating or reading the music in this situation.

Bishop (as cited in Jackson, 2023) wrote “Sliding glass doors provide readers and/or listeners with the chance to enter the story and temporarily become a part of that identity” (p. 55). The idea of sliding glass doors in music is special to me because when students get to learn about cultures other than their own they have an opportunity to participate in traditions other than their own. Henninger (2018) discussed the benefits of teaching world music to elementary students in particular. When students are younger, they are more receptive to learning about music that comes from around the world. This

helps broaden their preferences in music, increases students' receptivity to new music, and it also teaches students to be more accepting of one another. The idea is to expose kids when they have the most “opened-earedness” (as cited in Henninger, 2018, p.6). This phenomenon happens when people are in elementary school and also college (Henninger, 2018, p. 6). I do notice that my upper elementary students are a bit more closed-eared when I am starting to present things that are unfamiliar to them. My goals will be to start to expose them frequently when they are in early elementary, so when they become upper elementary students they will just know that is how music goes.

Henninger (2018) and Bond (2014) discussed the importance of making this kind of exposure something that is often done. Bond (2014) discussed planning a concert around world music. When one plans a special world music concert or does world music on special occasions that is sending the message that it is independent or different from the Western European music. World music should be taught in tandem with all music. If one is teaching about all music, it will create a more fluid timeline of the world and validate everyone. The music may sound different, or the approach to learn the music may be different but all are equally valid (p. 12).

Part of going through the sliding glass door would be through teaching music authentically to students. I touched on this briefly in the review, does one teach it through the reading of the notation on the page, or should it be taught in the manner that it is taught in the culture it belongs to (Shaw, 2012; Torchon (2022)? Authenticity (as cited in Torchon 2022) is defined as “conforming to an original so as to reproduce essential features [and] made or done the same way as the original” (p. 31). In order for everyone

to have a deeper understanding of the music they are creating it is important that one presents the text in both languages. Students are able to have an understanding of what they are singing about. The music created should be produced on the instruments (or as close to as possible) that the culture uses to create the sounds (Torchon, 2022, p. 31). Students are engaging in conversation not just about the creation of the music but also the sociocultural context of the music as this supports higher understanding and retention of the lesson being taught (Henninger, 2018, p. 7).

I have noticed that when I have taught lessons with background information surrounding the music, my students have a higher buy-in. Students appreciate and recall the visuals presented, the conversations around the social context of the music and the appreciation of when I pull out instruments that they normally wouldn't get to see or use. Some of the details in what I am presenting may not be music per se, but it is closely related to what we are doing. Students catch different details that are important to them and it creates a connection of why this is important to them. As Henninger (2018) discussed, teaching music in this manner helps students gain understanding, respect, and even appreciation for those who are different from them (p. 7).

Involving a culture insider into the classroom will help increase the authenticity of the musical experience that students will have. Henninger (2018) defines a cultural insider as a member of the culture or individuals who have been immersed in the culture for a considerable amount of time. When one takes the time to learn from insiders within the local community or school it adds an element of authenticity to the lesson (p. 7). Belz (2006) stated that "a cultural insider should attest to the authenticity of the experience and

any accompanying recordings” (p. 45). I know when I am learning things firsthand from people who have mastered different cultures or have different skills, I pass on the way they taught me. I can also see it in the students to whom I have personally taught skills to. I have taught at my school for four years and there is a difference between the students who have only had me as instructor for their entire experience versus those who have had previous instructors. There is just something different about how they operate. The same would be true for me as an educator, having a firsthand experience with a cultural insider. I would be able to pass on their skill or knowledge to my students and I would also have their seal of authenticity. I hypothesize that this would also create higher receptivity from my students. It is not just me teaching it, but it comes from a certain person (Belz, 2006; Henninger, 2018; Torchon, 2022).

Torchon (2022) gave examples of teaching music from various parts of the world. Two of the examples connected strongly with the manner in which I teach using Orff Schulwerk (Sarrazin, 2016; Torchon, 2022). Torchon discussed teaching a Cuban Cha-Cha-Chá; it is recognizable to most students (Torchon, 2022). There is a strong connection between the rhythmic groove and the dance which could be taught by using the Orff Schulwerk approach of dancing to the groove and transferring it to the instruments. In Cuba, music is mostly taught orally/aurally, which is the same method implemented by the Schulwerk (Sarrazin, 2016; Torchon, 2022). Torchon (2022) also discussed teaching Indonesian Gamelan Music. As mentioned before, it is important to use authentic instruments or as close to the authentic instrument you have (p. 31). The

Schulwerk metallophones were inspired by the music from Indonesia and were created specifically for children (Sarrazin, 2016).

The research on how to expand my students' horizons through mirrors, windows, and sliding glass doors gives me the courage to go all in to help my students feel seen in the classroom. Jackson (2023) gave me the inspiration to consider pulling kids through the door and into the music in a greater way, not just for the sake of being diverse, but for the sake of kids being seen. Bond, Henninger, and Torchon provide me the steps to take to authentically expose my students to music from cultures other than their own. This mindset will ultimately help my students hear their songs being sung, their dances being danced, and their culture being discussed. All of these things are great, but I would like to discuss cultural appropriation as it is important to be sure that student's cultures are not being misrepresented along with being taken advantage of.

Avoiding Cultural Appropriation

Rogers (2006) defined cultural appropriation as “the use of a culture’s symbols, artifacts, genres, rituals, or technologies of another culture” (p. 474). Rogers broke cultural appropriation into four categories: “cultural exchange, cultural dominance, cultural exploitation, and transculturation” (p. 474). Beveridge (2022) applied these categories to music education and explained how cultural appropriation could happen in the classroom (p. 60).

Cultural exchange happens “when the groups in question have equal power when exchanging symbols, artifacts or rituals” (Beveridge, 2022, p. 60). Beveridge gave the example of Beyonce and Shakira’s song “Beautiful Liar.” This song is infused with Latin

pop and has Middle Eastern tonality throughout. One can hear and see the equal partnership. Beveridge outlined an example of having a guest come into the classroom to teach students how to engage in Ghanaian drumming or how to sing a song in a different language. “Having a guest come in isn’t necessarily exploitative if the teacher includes age-appropriate context” (p. 60).

Transculturation happens when a mixture of elements from various cultures get all mixed up to create something new. Beveridge provided examples of musical transculturation: “jazz, samba, and mariachi” (p. 61). When students learn specific things from various cultures and then at a different time apply the techniques or styles from one culture to the next, that is transculturation (Beveridge, 2022, p. 61). I take away that if a student learned the elements of the cha-cha-cha as described by Torchon (2022) and applied the rhythmic playing to a xylophone in a different context, this would be transculturation at work.

Rogers defined cultural exploitation as “where the dominant group adopts practices of the subordinate group without ‘substantive reciprocity, permission, and/or compensation’”(as cited in Beveridge, 2022, p. 61). Teachers need to be cognizant that the students that are sitting in front of them may or may practice the traditions that are being studied. It is important to simply ask the class, *who celebrates xyz?* This will give students who practice the tradition the voice of experience versus the teacher who may or may not have the experience of the tradition (p. 61).

Cultural dominance occurs when the culture that is not dominant assimilates and takes on the culture that is dominant. This can easily happen in the music classroom

around Christmas time. There are many times that “winter programs” programs are programmed under the guise of winter programs because it is mainly Christmas music with one song from Hannukah built in. The one song isn’t the focus of the program and it is used to state that the program is inclusive (Beveridge, 2022, p. 61).

Howard (2020) discussed the importance of avoiding cultural appropriation because it not only hurts the populations that material is being misrepresented or taken from, but it also affects those who are not a part of the tradition or culture. It creates space for prejudice, discrimination, and racism. For educators to avoid this situation it is essential to truly take a moment and study the tradition or culture that one is presenting. Educators are presenting more than just songs. Music comes from people and with people come lots of traditions and societal issues. When one is able to acknowledge or educate learners on these issues the learning becomes more authentic, empathetic, respectful, and understanding of others (pp. 69-71).

Howard (2020) emphasized the importance of “multicultural sensitivity defined as the desire or motivation to understand, appreciate, and accept the differences between diverse cultures” (p. 70). As an educator, I want to create the space for myself to study and connect with the cultures that I am presenting on. This paves the way for myself and my students to appreciate vs appropriate.

Howard (2020), Beveridge (2022), and Shaw (2012) outlined thoughts educators should keep in mind while programming culturally diverse pieces. One should ask themselves why and what is the specific plan with the piece of music or culture one is working with? Is what we are working with relevant? If not, how can it become relevant?

How will this piece build on what my students already know? What would capitalize on their past experiences? How would one give a bigger picture/background of the piece to students i.e. where does it come from, who wrote it, and what is the time frame? Is there an opportunity to work with a culture bearer who can provide feedback or education in response to the work that is being performed? Is the educator able to demonstrate deeper understanding and respect for the culture and in return are the students able to articulate deep understanding and respect for the culture being covered? How might a cultural insider feel about the placement, preparation, and presentation of their cultural piece? (Beveridge, 2022; Howard, 2020). All of these questions provide ample opportunity for educators to consider and research to effectively foster deeper learning, opportunities for kids to feel seen, and also opportunities for kids to go through the sliding glass door. This research helps give me footing to acquire material for my students without taking advantage of others. It inspires me to consider how to best shape the delivery of the material in a culturally appropriate manner to ensure authenticity. When material is delivered in such a manner, I believe that this will help my students feel seen in my classroom setting.

Conclusion

In this section the literature points to a history of music education in the United States. It hasn't changed much and the primary pedagogies used are from Europe, but it can be stretched and applied to music other than Western Music. The literature showcased what culturally responsive teaching looks like in the music classroom. We have covered the importance of expanding students' worldview and how to ensure that

one is not taking or misrepresenting the cultures that are being studied. All of this gives theoretical answers to help my students feel seen in the classroom, appropriate steps to program music, dances, or stories into my everyday teaching, and to help students feel like their culture is valued.

In chapter three, I outline how and why I will be implementing my project in my classroom and I identify the setting of my project. I will lay out an analysis of how I will know if my project was effective along with a timeline for my project to be complete.

CHAPTER THREE

Introduction

Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong? This is where the rubber met the road.

In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of my project, a description of research my project was anchored in, the setting and description of my audience, the timeline of my project, assessment of effectiveness, and a transition to chapter four.

Description

My project was to intentionally implement culturally responsive teaching into my music instruction. The traditional curriculum used is very Eurocentric and does not reflect all of my students. I felt that students are living in a world that is much more connected than when I was a student and that my learners could learn about one another through music. My ultimate goal is for students to be able to work with others who may be different from them. I want them to recall a couple of things they learned about their culture or have an openness to difference. It is learning deeper than just the songs, but the social context to help the lesson stick and increase empathy or social awareness (Henninger, 2018).

When one looks at my project documents they will see that I have created a foundation that one could build off with lesson plans and activities. I am grateful that I will have the opportunity to work with most of my students for their entire K-5 experience. This affords me time to build relationships with families to gain familiarity

and trust with one another to contribute thoughts and ideas into the programming of their child's music experience.

My project involved intentionally presenting folk songs, dances, and stories from the various cultures represented in my building. Gay (2000) outlined the importance of teaching to who is in front of me and that was the impetus of my project. Through research of Jackson, I wanted to focus on presenting material to my students that would be considered mirrors (self-reflection), windows (seeing others), and sliding glass doors (walking into the picture) (Jackson, 2023). My intention was to teach to my students, meaning who are the kids directly in front of me. Get to know them and incorporate the cultures that are sitting in front of me.

Research

The research that was featured in chapter two solidified that my inner inkling was right on! I had the feeling that if I wanted to reach out to my students and help them learn about one another or be seen in my classroom, I needed to use the backgrounds of the students that were in front of me. Gay (2000) wrote that culturally relevant teaching does the following for students: it is validating, comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory and it is personified (pp. 29-36). Gay is telling us that this is effective for students of color however, it really does this for everyone present in the classroom.

Shaw (2012) applied Gay's findings and found that one can dig into the curriculum a lot deeper to find connection with their students. The students are not just getting exposed to music that may be unfamiliar or new, but they are having an in-depth

experience learning about the background of the music and its social context. When this happens the music sticks better along with the context behind it. When students know about the meaning surrounding the learning it becomes more personal and effective (p.79).

Bond (2014) implemented Gay's findings into their choir program and found that it was important to ensure that students are working with new music often and to be sure not to just feature "world music" in a special concert because it creates a message that not all music is equal. World music should be taught in tandem with all music, this creates a more fluid timeline of the world and it will validate everyone. The music may sound different or the way it is played or taught is different, but it is still valid (p. 12).

Henninger (2018) discussed the benefits of teaching world music to elementary students in particular. When students are younger they are more receptive to learning about music that comes from around the world. This helps broaden their preferences in music, increases students' receptivity to new music, and it also teaches students to be more accepting of one another. The idea is to expose kids when they have the most "opened-earedness" (LeBlanc et. al as cited in Henninger, 2018, p.6).

Jackson (2023) presented material on simply having character's of color present in books to be seen. Meaning the subject of the book wasn't about the character's race; but rather, the story happened to feature a person of color. Students can be presented with the idea of windows, mirrors, and sliding glass doors to expand their worldview. Students are able to experience and learn about different cultures through music in my classroom setting. I believe that when the research of Jackson (2023), Henninger (2018), Bond

(2014) and Shaw (2012) are put together in practice, students will get an experience that reflects all backgrounds in my space.

Setting

I teach K-5 music in an elementary school in the North Metro of Minneapolis, MN. Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) shows enrollment at 666 students; 80.2% of students scored at or above proficiency in math, and 71.3% scored at or above proficiency in reading. MDE cited that 15.4% of the students in my building are considered Minority Enrollment. We have 84.7% of students who identify as white, 5.1% of students who identify as two or more races, 3.9% of students who identify as Hispanic/Latino, 3.0% who identify as Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander, 2.3% who identify as Black or African American, and 0% that identify as Other Indigenous Peoples.

Our school features a gifted and talented program for grades 3-5 called Odyssey. The students who are enrolled in this program have extremely high test scores along with high cogAT³ scores. Our school district consists of five elementary buildings so when kids qualify, they leave their original elementary within the district and are bused to our school. Families have the option to enroll their children in this program, not all families opt into Odyssey. This particular group of students is incredibly intelligent, they are working with material a grade or two above grade level. Our district had started to provide busing to anyone in our district who qualifies for this program a couple of years ago. Prior to the busing, if a student did not qualify for this program their parents had to

³ cogAT tests assess general abstract reasoning abilities, the application of reasoning to verbal, quantitative, and non verbal tasks.

bring them to our building. I have noticed a growth in diversity since busing has become an option for these students.

One of our school district's initiatives is to create an equitable experience for all learners. If we are only learning about music from white people and white people's traditions we are not equitably serving the community as a whole. It is the job of the school and school district to create lifelong learners and that needs to expand beyond just the books that we read but into the human relationships that are built.

Timeline

For this capstone project, I implemented my project as I built it. My timeline ran from January 2024- mid April 2024. This project can start as a good starting point for someone to replicate what I have created, but it is ultimately for myself and my students. I consider this a starting point for myself and plan on replicating it throughout the years to come.

The month of January was set to focus on my fourth grade concert and Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. During the month of January my fourth graders worked on learning Vivir Mi Vida in Spanish, their dance break featuring Salsa dance moves, creating their instruments along with learning about Ada's violin, relearning their "Peace Round" and social conversations around the music.

In the month of January, I started to research and prepare a curriculum for Chinese New Year and Black Heritage Month. I chose to plug Chinese New Year into first grade and placed my Black Heritage lesson plans in second grade. I found I was able to plug in the tradition of money and rhythms to marry together to drive teaching

composing with set rhythms and set pitches. My second graders took a strong interest in the MLK lesson presented in January, and decided it would be beneficial and meaningful to expand more on their learning and present their learning in a live concert in May.

In the month of February, third graders are reaching the point in their learning where they have experienced singing together in unison, echoing, partner singing, and singing in rounds or canons. The traditional curriculum starts to introduce call and response or question and answer. I will use *First Steps in Global Music* By Howard (2020) to introduce the style of music called Call and Response.

In the months of February and March my third grade students also start to work in ‘la’ pentatonic. Which is a five note scale that is minor sounding versus major. The holidays that my students celebrate are Easter and Ramadan in the month of March. I plan on incorporating a Somali song entitled “Somali Lullaby” from the book *The Rhythm of Somalia: A Collection of Songs, Stories and Traditions* by Hassan and Buck (2023). Somali Lullaby is in ‘la’ pentatonic and it will create space for students to learn about Somali and also Ramadan.

Assessment

I believe that there are many ways that one could assess if my implementation of culturally responsive teaching in music is effective. Data could be collected if the lessons that reflect students in my setting happened at all. What grade levels are they happening in, what is the timing of the presentation? Prior to my project, the curriculum seldomly dug into cultures outside of Western Music.

When I consider the research that I have done I think of Gay (2000); how is my project validating my students? Is it comprehensive, multidimensional, empowering, transformative, emancipatory and it is personified (pp. 29-36)? When I think of Shaw, 2012; Torchon 2022) was the material presented in an authentic way? Did I do my best to research the social context around the music to tell the story to enhance the meaning?

Henninger (2018) outlined the importance of social context because it really helps everything stick. I feel that if I hear my students talking about the lesson with one another, or a “Hey, Mrs. T., so and so taught me this on the playground and this has to do with xyz.. Are we doing this today?” Then yes— The lesson was effective. When I receive the email of “Hey Mrs. T, my son is begging me for that one song you did in Spanish today, could you send us the Youtube link?” Yes, it was effective. Henninger wrote about the open “earedness” of younger learners and early exposure. Jackson (2023) reminds us of looking at mirrors, seeing out windows, and entering in through the sliding glass doors. If one does these in tandem it will bring so much joy to the learning of music. If students are actively bringing what they have experienced home to talk with families about their learning, then it is effective in my world.

Conclusion and Preview

In conclusion of chapter three, I would again like to state my burning question(s): *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* My hope is that you as the reader were able to draw strong connections to how my project aimed to answer my question. My description

of my project and timeline were a series of actions that were backed up by research of those who have gone before me. My hope is that my assessment options of my project, although subjective, could garner some inspiration of the goodness that could come from presenting materials that reflect my learners. In chapter four I will be discussing what I have learned and synthesize my next steps after my capstone project.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong? These questions have been my driving force for the past school year while working on this paper. I want all students to feel seen and heard in my subject area. Everyone brings their own culture with them into the classroom, it doesn't stop at the school door. I want to capitalize on this for my students to learn about themselves and ultimately learn about others through each other's music.

In this chapter I will be sharing my major learnings from the literature review and implementation of my project. I will discuss the implications and limitations of my project, future research, and finally will communicate the results of my project and how that will benefit students but will benefit the profession.

Major Learnings and Review Literature Revisit

Asking the question(s) *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* has really shaped how I approached teaching this past year. I am looking at who my students are and what experiences they bring to the classroom. I know that I have overarching learning targets for all of my students that I need to attain, but are there more ways of attaining them through a wider lens of music and cultures from around the world? I knew

the answer would be a yes and I just needed to set aside the time to find some of the answers. As I started and even now, I know that the small steps that I started to incorporate are ‘an answer’ they may not always be ‘the answer,’ and as my students in front of me change or I discover more music from different cultures, I can plug various items in when it is appropriate.

I purposefully started to present things during the school year so I could incorporate them into concerts. This was based on research from Bond (2014) who discussed the idea of refraining from presenting concerts that are carved out as a special concert that features music from around the world. I had personally never heard this point of view until researching this topic for my project. Bond (2014) and Shaw (2012) both share findings that when the material presented matches the students in the room, it creates an environment where all music is considered valuable and has an equal seat at the table. Henninger (2018) discussed that students who are younger in age have more of an open ear or open perspective to hearing music that is outside of their culture. I noticed when implementing music from around the world and tying it to the social context, students have a deeper understanding and buy into the music itself (Bond, 2014). I was very intentional with pointing out where all the music was coming from partially in fear of the reaction of students or families feeling or questioning “why are we doing so much music from other places?” Students could easily see themselves or I would hear comments in class, oh my neighbor (who is in a different grade learning something else) taught me this thing you taught them.

When I had first started to implement music from around the world, it was (and still is) a bit uncomfortable. I had and have to still push past the fear of the following: am presenting material incorrectly? Inauthentically? Could I upset someone? Will I get called out for making an error in my speaking, presenting or unintended cultural appropriation?

I have learned that my students will call me out if they are a native speaker, however, they have been welcomed to call me out and help me; which has created space for students to have more skin in the game and learn from one another. I have learned a bit more about myself, that I do research pretty in depth the things I present. My classroom is a space where students feel comfortable to share their lived experiences even if they may not be in line with what I am presenting. Students see me actively writing as they are speaking so I can further my research to learn and expand learning for others. There have been a couple of times during my project where it was a dialect or reading issue. For example, I was presenting a folk song from Mexico about a citron fruit but the other words in it had no meaning. I had researched it, listened and watched many recordings of the song and the game. A student kept telling me that I was saying it wrong and that it was not a fruit, it was a belt. Belt in Spanish is cinturón. Similar spelling but definitely not the same thing. I had to pause in front of a live class and let them know that the research I had done was extensive and by reputable sources, but I would have to look further into it. We moved to something else as it was only part of my lesson. I rechecked and spoke with other Spanish speakers and learned about the misunderstanding and was able to connect with my student in a stronger way!

Jackson (2023) argued that it is important for students to have opportunities to look into mirrors, look out of windows, and walk through the glass doors with the content that is being taught. I have learned that when students can honestly find themselves in a lot of things and learn that they have a lot in common with their classmates. There were beautiful moments where students would be ‘looking’ through the windows to learn about other cultures, but there was a culture bearer in their particular section that could provide their expertise to really make the learning experience come alive for all. There were many times that students were able to walk through the sliding glass door to sing, dance, and perform (where appropriate) music from other cultures. The mirror, window, and sliding glass door really helped me frame my project and conversations with students.

Bond (2014) was forefront in my mind to ensure what I was teaching would be in the everyday canon and not just something special in a concert. It helped assert all music’s place in my student’s lives. Shaw (2012) echoed throughout my teaching with the consideration of how would style of teaching happen for that culture? The example was used for teaching gospel music to kids who are versed in how that is taught outside of school. One would not use standard solfege teaching for this style of music. I found that this was the case for lots of the music that I was working with for my kids. Torchon (2022) taught me to try my best to present and perform the music in the most accurate way possible. Howard (2020) and Hassan and Buck (2023) helped me learn through having recordings of native singers singing the pieces, the notation, native speakers

speaking the language, along with spelling out how the words sound. This gave me footing to play the recordings over and over again on my commute to get it into my body.

The last thing that I will mention with regards to my learning. I learned that my kids and families were incredibly grateful for the experiences that they have had. I have received several emails, verbal exchanges in the hallway, or a conversation after a concert with gratitude for their kids learning all of the things that they have learned. The conversations are specific and they reflect my mission of answering my burning question(s) of *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?*

Implications and Limitations

I strongly believe that students should be seen and heard in all spaces. When music from all over the world is presented in the normal everyday curriculum, students will become more aware of the world that is around them. Students' worlds have become smaller, while yet the world is so big. When students have the opportunity to engage in learning about other cultures they will be able to relate with people who may be different from themselves. This research is supported by Henninger (2018) who discussed that when students are exposed to music from around the world at a younger age, they have more of an openness to listening and understanding. This also connects to outside the world of listening to music, it extends to students being more warm and respectful. This all feeds into why we have schools. We are trying to shape future citizens.

There are a few limitations that come to mind when thinking about my project. I teach 25 sections (around 635 students), I see them twice a week for 30 minutes, and I am only one person. I see students for such a short snippet of their week and I am charged with the task of getting to know students, engaging them in the creation of music through singing, saying, playing various instruments, and dancing, fostering a love and appreciation for music, assessing their musical creation and participation for grading, ensuring that when creating we are in alignment with state standards, presenting material in an authentic way, and presenting to the public and classmates the creation of music. As you can see, this is a list that could go on and on when it just comes to me being one person. My reach is only so far.

Another limitation is that I am a white woman who is a wife and mom. This affects a couple of things for me. I have biases that are known and unknown; and when I become aware of my biases, I do my best to address them and learn so I can do better and pass on the better to the people that are within my reach. I have been afforded several privileges in my life that oftentimes I am blind to them and assume or forget that the people that I interact with may not have the same worldview or have been afforded those privileges. As a mother of a young child, I feel a little more limited in my time.

In order to learn and present music that I am not familiar with, it takes a fair amount of time to ensure that when I am presenting material that it is from a reputable source, that I am presenting it as authentically as possible, as accurately as possible, and that students are learning where the music comes from and the context around the music. In order to learn music that is outside of my culture, I feel it is best to learn through a

hands on experience from a culture bearer. This reminds me of my Orff Schulwerk experience, it is hands-on and as a learner, I am being taught through the creation of music. For myself, I believe for me to best learn West African Drumming, it is best to learn from someone from that culture. That takes time, it takes relationships, and it takes money.

Instrumentation can also be a limitation. I am fortunate enough to have a pretty large collection of barred instruments, non-pitched percussion instruments, and ukuleles. This instrumentation works with the lessons that I included in my project. However, there is more music in the world than what was presented in my project. Yes, kids could watch someone else play the instruments that I do not have on Youtube, but then how are they having an opportunity to create the music? How are they having an opportunity to walk through the sliding glass door? (Jackson, 2023) For example, I do not have a set of tubanos or djembes for students to play. These would be required for West African drumming. I have hand drums available for my students, but that is not the same and I am not sure if I would present West African drumming on those as it would not be an authentic experience (Torchon, 2022).

Future Research

I plan to carry on with the implementation of culturally responsive teaching in my classroom. Just like with any new song or new thing that I implement in my classroom I know that it is going to take patience, it is going to take time, and at times I will be nervous about the “unknown”. I am grateful that I have a very strong rapport with my students and that they are willing to engage with me in the materials that I present. My

classroom is run with lots of trust and care for one another. This project and the continuation of culturally responsive teaching will only strengthen the trust and care for one another as we learn about and from each other.

During the time of writing this project, Saint Thomas University launched a new program with diverse perspectives in music. According to their website, the program features courses that have hands-on learning with African Ensemble, Latin Music, East Asian Music Cultures, options to get certified from the Smithsonian Institution in world music, and there is a course that is a class about social justice applied to the music world. This excites me because these are the things that I feel limited in, so enrolling and gaining access to the knowledge and relationships with people in the forefront of diverse music will help me better serve my students. I am hoping to be able to enroll in the next couple of years as it takes time and money.

If one wants to replicate this project, I recommend reaching out and starting to create relationships. I started to create relationships with the cultural liaisons in my school district as they know the families, the cultures, and they are also employees of the school district. It has been rewarding for me to have them come into my classroom to educate myself and my students. This is something that could be replicated in other buildings, so students can see someone who is not their typical music teacher in front of them talking about their culture and the music that comes from their culture. In my experiences with this, it has created great joy for the cultural liaison because they get to be in the classroom with kids engaging with topics about the families that they serve.

Communication of Results

The results from my project have had a positive impact on all of my students. My students are pretty vocal with each other and their families about what they are experiencing in my classroom. At the time of writing this project, I was also in my professional observation year by an administrator. My administration was well aware of my project and the materials that I was implementing. I communicated with him often about the things my students and I were experiencing and families would also communicate with him via email, phone calls, or passing in the hallway positive remarks about what their students were experiencing.

I have communicated with my colleagues across the district about my project as this incorporates music from the specific cultures that are seated in my classroom that isn't presented by our traditional curriculum. There seems to be interest, however, it is also a lot of work to learn extra things to present. I think it will get there with time and also naturally as our district is becoming more diverse and the demand to meet students equitably is rising.

I believe for myself, the results for the most part will communicate themselves. I just need to quietly do the work and the students and families will be the mouthpiece. I am generally a pretty consistent and quiet person. I like to let what I have helped create take the center stage.

Benefits to the Profession

Teaching all music is liberating but also intimidating. When more and more people start to diversify the music they are presenting and share about their experiences,

the less intimidating it will become. Teaching music from all parts of the world allows for space for students to explore the required learning standards through multiple lenses that are all valid. It gives permission for educators to explore and make decisions on how to best represent the music that reflects their students and builds greater rapport with students and families, which contributes to the health of school districts that exist to serve all.

Summary and Conclusion

In chapter four I have reflected on my learning and project implementation. In this project I was on the search to answer the following question(s): *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* My reflections include major learnings in conjunction with a revisit to the literature that substantiated my project, the implications and limitations of my project, future research plans, the communication of my results, and the benefits to the profession. I feel that I have a solid start in the continuation of implementing culturally responsive teaching in my elementary music classroom.

In conclusion, I have decided that my mantra in my classroom will be: *Can you see yourself in my classroom? Do you hear the songs of your culture being sung, the stories being told, or the dances being danced? How can I help you see yourself? How can I help you feel like you belong?* It is imperative that I continue the work that I have started with culturally responsive teaching in my classroom setting to not only help the students who are not often seen in the everyday material that is covered in school but for

all students to learn about one another. This has been a rewarding experience watching my classroom and students really dig into the music that has been presented. This approach has also helped me feel closer to my students.

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