

Danielle Holmes: Peace-Building Project

Intro/Background

Through various readings and forum posts, we know that music has the power to change and impact the world in negative and positive ways. It can bring groups of people together, spark conversation, move people emotionally and so much more.

“The Frameworks of Music” introduced peacemaking and how it is possible in our music classrooms. The significant word we used was "empathy". In order to create a peaceful music experience, you must first understand your students and be sure lessons are scaffolded correctly. We discussed the idea of "musicking", bringing groups of people together informally. The 2nd chapter talks about meeting people where they are and accepting their culture and backgrounds. Something every teacher must do for their students.

“Politics and Music,” included stories of how music has been used (and continues to be used) as a means of expression. The assignment I found most interesting from this unit was re-writing the lyrics to "We Shall Overcome". I found this lesson to be moving and meaningful for my students. Re-writing the original lyrics to describe our struggles was impactful and I already have ideas how to present it to my students to experience the same effect.

My school’s peace-building project is a *Peace Day!* It is cross-curricular music project that includes art and literature. All grades and classes will participate. The goal for Peace Day is to bring students together to have an Secondary English Language (SEL) Learning Day with their peers and parents. Participants sing, read, create, garden and come together to promote peace and love in our school and community. It is sure to be an action-packed day!

Narrative/Description of Activities

In October, my school will see its first ever *Peace Day!* The day begins as the students walk into school. They will be greeted with a decorated school filled with positive messages posted everywhere. Messages like “Be Yourself”, “A flower must grow through dirt”, “Be the reason someone smiles today”, and more will be on colorful post-its and banners. While the school has art and positive posters, me and the PTA will be decorating the school the night before Peace Day.

There will be 2 assemblies one for grades K-2, then another following for 3-5. Each grade will have a song to present. Suggested songs include "Peace like a River" for Kindergarten, "This Little Light of Mine" for 1st grade, “What a Wonderful World/Somewhere Over the

Rainbow” for 2nd, and so forth. For the older grades, students will sing the welcome/peace songs from my experience in Jamaica, one of them being "Rivers of Babylon". Each grade level presents their own song to share with the other grades.

After sharing the songs, the assembly is turned over to the library teacher who reads "I am Peace" or a book of her choosing that fits the theme. Link for I am Peace by Susan Verde found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vnR5HDfR3JI>. I especially like the message in this book and the illustrations are beautiful.

After the story is read, the art teacher presents some of the positive message rocks the students have painted in their art classes. The rocks will have uplifting words on them (ex: inspire, be kind, thankful, etc.).



Students then proceed outside to place their painted rock into the designated garden area. They are flower bulbs to plant and flower seeds bought by PTA. The students place their flower blub into the ground which is wrapped in their peace promise. What is a peace promise? A peace promise is a small piece of paper filled out by the student before this day. The promise is about 2-3 sentences explaining how they can bring peace to their school and community and their promise to continue. This act of planting is special because in the spring, their flower will bloom and represent their peace promise “in action”

After planting, the students are brought inside to work on their peace songs utilizing the template from re-writing "We Shall Overcome" and the student groups are mixed across classes (same grade level) to ensure inclusivity and creativity. At the end of the assembly, student groups will sing their newly composed songs. Before the

students are dismissed, students sing our “School Song”, a song that the entire school knows. At that point the assembly ends.

Parent Assembly!

The following afternoon, parents/guardians are invited to come see the peace garden we created and experience writing peace songs, with the guidance of their children. (I realize that it is difficult to get parents to participate in activities that require creativity and individual/group thought.) The students go back into the groups they worked in that day and the parents join their children. The kids lead their parents in selecting a new focus word and help their parents compose. Parents hear the same story by the librarian and have a opportunity to share their new songs at the conclusion of the parent assembly.

Timetable

| Time | Description | Why? |
|-------------|---|---|
| 00:00-00:05 | Welcome Song | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To welcome everyone to the assembly • engage singing voice and mind • Come together over various grade levels and feel connected |
| 00:05-00:15 | Presentation of Grade Level Peace Songs Presentation of "I am Peace" | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grades K,1,2 will present and perform peace songs with positive message (then grades 3,4,5 in following assembly) • Connection to Literature, positive message, mindfulness practice |
| 00:15-00:30 | Presentation of Painted Rocks/Plant Bulbs with Peace Promises | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connection to art and school community planting |
| 00:30-00:40 | Writing of Peace Songs | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use words on peace rocks to create their own songs • engage mind and connect with others over topics learned |

00:4
0-00:
55

Volunteers Perform/Closing
thoughts

- Share peace songs if comfortable
- Review topics learned
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Summary

Music holds great power to heal individuals and groups. Peace Day is a very special day that my students and families will always remember. I appreciate that we can use music to bring various groups together: music, SEL, art, and literature. I am excited to include the community and include the PTA as well. I am hopeful to make this a recurring event every year as the students will enjoy it and look forward to it. Collaboration with empathy is just the beginning of where my school and I can take Peace Building and I'm excited to see where this takes us. Peace starts with me!

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