

## **A Voice for Change**

### Background and Introduction

Throughout my time of learning how to be a peacemaker, I reflect on the ideas and values I take away. These ideas and values are not only for the sake of peacebuilding, but they reflect on my teaching as a whole. As a teacher who teaches at a low-income school, I think about how I can empathize with my students as a teacher and through music. The phrase 'Music is a Universal Language' allows me to connect to my students the best of my ability despite the "barrier" of coming from different backgrounds. "This phrase minimizes the very real differences between different "music," and the extent to which the socialization and education of the listener contribute to the meanings that is derived in a musical encounter." (Cohen, 2008, p.38) To get over this "barrier", to me, means being proactive rather than reactive. Giving my students the opportunity to express what music means to them, rather than what music means to others is part of my goal. The big goal as a teacher is to connect to my students through critical thinking and cultural response. This project, is the result of my thinking, on how I am able to empathize, connect, collaborate, and understand my students better than the previous year.

As a music educator, it is important that my students are able to voice their opinions through change. As a small representation of the future generation that represents and shapes America, I want them to feel comfortable to be able to voice their opinions. As Baruch Whitehead states, "Music was an essential part of freedom" (Whitehead, 2008, p. 81) As we get further into the year, I see a lot of these freedoms being taken away by the hierarchy of government. I want my students to be able to express these concerns in a non-violent manner

and express for change through the power of peacebuilding in music. “In empathizing, we, while retaining fully the sense of our own distinct consciousness, enter actively and imaginatively into others’ inner states to understand how they experience their world and how they are feeling” (Laurence, 2008, p. 24) As stated by Laurence, it is very important that our students learn how to empathize at a young age, so that we are able to teach them how to communicate non-violently. They can learn how to become peacebuilders themselves.

With recent events such as the school shooting in Texas, or the shooting at Tops in Buffalo, it is important that my students understand that music can be unpeaceful music as well. “There is militarism in these national anthems, but it’s not directed at any specific other” (Kent, 2008, pg. 106) Even in national anthems there are lyrics that are considered unpeaceful. My goal is to have my students learn that when we create music, it needs to be in a positive and peaceful manner. That is what I intend to do with this project, so that my students can have a voice, but they know how they can know how to use it to make a positive impact.

### Project Introduction

This project focuses on creating music that is symbolic and representative of who they are and their beliefs. This is their way of peacebuilding through the arts and be able to experience empathy through musicking. Through activities from Musicians Without Borders, improvisation, and songwriting activities the students have the opportunity to share and express emotion through their project. Although they are young learners, they have a voice and say what happens in their school, community and even the world, I want them to have that confidence.

This project is presented in the general music setting and is scaffolded through seven grades. Throughout the seven years, they learn to develop their own ideas through a positive, safe, and encouraging environment. This project is not seen as a curriculum, but as a unit where year the students feel more comfortable and safer to voice their opinions. As a school that has a majority of black students, I want to make sure my students know that they matter, and their culture matters.

Kindergarten experiences emotions, as they identify and improv different emotions and have the opportunity to express themselves through non-verbal communication. First grade does a similar thing, but work as a group to tell a story through non-verbal communication that shows different emotions. Second grade takes that a step further and create their own story. Third grade has the opportunity to create an anthem that represents their class. This anthem is used for the rest of their years at this school as they have the opportunity to edit each year and improve it as they start to form their own opinions. Fourth grade has the opportunity to discuss an issue in their school and create a song that expresses what changes or visions they view in their school. Fifth grade has the opportunity to research and discuss an issue in their community, expressing how they want to make a change. Sixth grade has the opportunity to research a global event and create a song expressing on what kind of changes they want to make.

As we get to the end goal, I would like to discuss the possibility of sending these songs they have created to a political figure to show that the students are here, and their voice matters. The end goal is to have my students walk away with the confidence and encouragement to voice their opinions and be the voice that makes the change through music making.

\*MWB Activity- Musician’s Without Borders Activity described below the timeline.

Grade	Activity Title	Activity Description	Activity Goal/ Character Goal	Day #1	Day #2	Day #3
Grade K	Discovering Emotions	Students explore different emotions through story and song.	<p>I can recognize different emotions</p> <p>I can recognize what emotion my friend is feeling.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 MWB activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:15 Emotion- Ask the students if they know what emotion means?</p> <p>Give them different examples and ask them to safely demonstrate them.</p> <p>9:15-9:35: Read Jamie Lee Curtis’ “Today I Feel Silly”</p> <p>Discuss the type of emotions they hear throughout the story and have them portray the emotions</p> <p>9:35-9:50 Have the students recognize emotions through listening to music.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students watch Pixar’s “Piper”</p> <p>Student’s discuss what emotions they felt throughout the video.</p> <p>I play the movie again, and ask them to give different music to play in the background to see what emotions the movie is portraying now.</p>
First Grade	Applying Emotions	Students explore different emotions and recognize them through story and song.	<p>I can recognize different emotions</p> <p>I can recognize what emotion my friend is feeling.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 MWB activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:15 Review Emotion- Ask the students if they remember what emotion means?</p> <p>Give them different examples and ask them to</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students create a story of their own that displays emotions. Have them work in groups and provide different topics. Examples: A</p>

					<p>safely demonstrate them.</p> <p>9:15-9:50</p> <p>Read Liz Fletchers "The Emotions Book"</p> <p>Discuss the type of emotions they hear throughout the story and have them portray the emotions</p> <p>9:35-9:50 Have the students recognize emotions through listening to music.</p>	<p>day at school, going to the mall, going to an amusement park etc. Have them provide why they are expressing that emotion.</p>
Second Grade	Creating Emotions	Students explore different emotions and recognize and apply them by creating their own story.	<p>I can recognize different emotions</p> <p>I can recognize what emotion my friend is feeling.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50- MWB Activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:15 Review Emotion- Ask the students if they remember what emotion means?</p> <p>Give them different examples and ask them to safely demonstrate them.</p> <p>9:15-9:35 Have the students recognize emotions through listening to music.</p> <p>9:35-9:50 Discuss the type of emotions they have throughout their lives and have them provide examples.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>Have the students think about an emotion they have felt before and have them recreate that through song and dance. They are welcome to pick a song that correlates with that emotion and dance to it.</p>

Third Grade	Third Grade Anthem	Students take the concepts they have learned of emotion and create a song to represent their class.	<p>I can use my emotions and portray a song that represents my class to create a class anthem.</p> <p>I can respect my classmate ideas and agree.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 MWB Activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students discuss positive characteristics about their class and write them down to include in their anthem</p> <p>Student start to write their refrain and verses</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students continue working on their anthem for as long as they need even if it needs more classes to continue writing.</p>
Fourth Grade	Songwriting: Addressing issues in the school	Students discuss and recognize topics of issues they are passionate about in their school and address them through songwriting.	<p>I can use my emotions and anthem to create a song that addresses school issues in a positive way.</p> <p>I can respect my classmate ideas and agree.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 MWB Activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students discuss their topic to write about, allowing for positive feedback from other classmates</p> <p>Students start to write their refrain and verses</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students continue working on their songs for as long as they need even if it needs more classes to continue writing.</p>
Fifth Grade	Songwriting: Addressing issues in the community	Students discuss and recognize topics of issues they are passionate about in their community and address them through songwriting.	<p>I can use my emotions and anthem to create a song that addresses community issues in a positive way.</p> <p>I can respect my classmate ideas and agree.</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 MWB Activity</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students discuss their topic to write about, allowing for positive feedback from other classmates</p>	<p>9:00-9:05 Hello Song</p> <p>9:05-9:50 Students continue working on their songs for as long as they need even if it needs more classes to</p>

					Students start to write their refrain and verses	continue writing.
Sixth Grade	Songwriting: Addressing issues in the World	Students discuss and recognize topics of issues they are passionate about in the world and address them through songwriting.	I can use my emotions and anthem to create a song that addresses worldwide issues in a positive way.  I can respect my classmate ideas and agree.	9:00-9:05 Hello Song  9:05-9:50 MWB Activity	9:00-9:05 Hello Song  9:05-9:50 Students discuss their topic to write about, allowing for positive feedback from other classmates  Students start to write their refrain and verses	9:00-9:05 Hello Song  9:05-9:50 Students continue working on their songs for as long as they need even if it needs more classes to continue writing.  We discuss what person outside of their classroom the students think we should share this with.

## Hello Song

[Hello, My Friends \(Children's Sing-Along\) | Kids Yoga, Music and Mindfulness with Yo Re Mi - YouTube](#)

*Hello my friends, (class repeats the line)*

*I'm here. I see you. (repeat)*

*Then at the same time:*

***Today, let's make something together.***

*Next, we say everyone's names. ALL of us say ALL the names.*

*Hello to Elliot, and Georgia, and Darrell, and Whitney, and Serena, and everyone says all the names, one time each, moving quickly from one to the next.*

*And, MEEEEEEEEEE! (everyone taps their own body)*

*Hello my friends, (class repeats the line)*

*I'm here. I see you. (repeat the line)*

*Then at the same time:*

*Today, let's make something together.*

### Musician's Without Borders Activity

Note that this is an example of an activity I would use with my students. The Musician's Without Borders activity is my way of setting up the positive and safe classroom allowing for its five principles of safety, inclusion, equality, creativity, and quality.

MWB Activity -

Teambuilding through Musical Expression:

1. Students repeat rhythm's given by teacher while students are in a circle through body percussion, this is a way to get the student's attention (For the older kids this can be done non-verbally)
2. Using the same rhythmic pattern, use different body parts. Once they are comfortable with that, try adding in syllables or voice. Have an established set of two patterns.
3. Split the class into two, have one group repeat pattern #1 then have the other group repeat pattern #2. Try having the students start at the same time. Feel free to have the

groups switch patterns. If the group is advanced, have them split up into three or four groups.

4. Ask a student to come up with their own pattern to create, there are wrong answers, just simply the goal of building trust and a safe and positive environment.
5. Discuss how this promotes non-violent communication and intercultural communication.

This Musician's Without Border activity maintains the five principles of safety, inclusion, equality, creativity, and quality. Through this activity, everyone is safe by not having wrong answers, and the students are encouraged to support each other. It has inclusion, which has everyone participating, and everyone is able to express themselves. Equality by having everyone participate, there are no wrong answers, and everyone has equal opportunity to participate. Creativity by having the students use their imagination to create a pattern of their own. Finally, quality because it teaches students how to collaborate in a respectful way. There is non-violent communication, and the students are still able to respect each other's views through creation of peacebuilding in music.

Check out more information on Musician's Without Borders here:

[Musicians Without Borders – War divides, music connects](#)

### Inclusion in the Music Classroom

As you get into the activities, make sure that everyone is included. This means, that all students in the classroom should be working on part of the activities whether that's working with a group to create a song, or making sure all students have the opportunity to give their input or express themselves either verbally or musically. If any accommodations need to be

made I recommend having the students work in smaller groups, or having the student work in the hallway with a small group so it is a quieter environment.

### Conclusion

This activity can and should be adapted to your students needs. The issues may be different for your students as far as the school and community issues go. This project is meant for unity and respectful collaboration to occur through non-violent communication. If you have noticed, I focused grades K-2 on the discovery and application of emotions. I believe building the knowledge of empathy and furthermore increase the positive environment, as well as build character for the students. Grades 3-6 really focuses on the students using their voice. If you are using these projects with students for the first time, that is completely okay. As I said, there may have to be some adaptation but I made the timelines broad on purpose so that in the end, it is your students work and not mine. Together, the students bring peace to the world as peacebuilders, and as the future generations of the world.

## Citations

- Cohen, C. (2008). Chapter 2- Music: A Universal Language? In O. Urbain (Ed.), *Music and conflict transformation harmonies and dissonances in geopolitics* (pp. 38–38). essay, I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.
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