



AOSA Professional Development Conference

November 7 – 10, 2018

Responding and Reflecting: Culturally Responsive Education Paul Cribari and Carolyn Brumfiel

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For this session, we posed one simple question to our fourth-grade students: “What does a composer look like?” In our planning sessions we predicted that the children would picture white men in wigs from long ago, composing at a piano with a plume and parchment. Although this was true for some children, we were pleasantly surprised to hear other children describe composers as both men and women, and people of any color working with a computer and a turntable. To reinforce this point, we shared a number of videos highlighting a diverse cross-section of composers from around the world. You may access this video at: <https://youtu.be/cmnDIDaZ1NY>

As we prepared for this unit, we made a conscious effort to maintain a lens of *Culturally Responsive Education* (CRE). In a CRE-focused class, teachers look at students and learning through six themes: asset-focused factors, relationships, rigor, engagement, cultural identity, and vulnerability.¹ In an effort to engage the children through their cultural identity, we began by taking a survey of their cultural backgrounds and the languages they speak in their homes. We then adapted each of those languages to the school’s PBIS acronym S.O.A.R. (Safety, Ownership, Achievement, Respect).

English
S O A R These are the values that we strive for. S O A R Ar-row-headThunder-birds!

Amharic
Tu-na - ka - ke a - la-fi-net mak - bur s - ket. Tu-na ka - ke a - la-fi-net mak - bur s - ket. Tu-na

Nepali
Up - a - lab - di A - dra. Up - a - lab - di A - dra. Up - a - lab - di A - dra. Up - a - lab - di A - dra.

Spanish
log - ro se-gu-ri-dad log - ro se-gu-ri-dad log - ro se-gu-ri-dad log - ro se-gu-ri-dad

Tagalog
Ta-gum-pay pag-a-lang Ta-gum-pay pag-a-lang Ta-gum-pay pag-a-lang Ta-gum-pay pag-a-lang

¹ Dr. Adeyemi Stembridge. <http://www.myreflectionmatters.org/author/dr-adeyemi-stembridge/>

In addition to cultural identity, we explored on the role of vulnerability during our CRE-focused instruction. Initially, this focused on learning a melody that Paul had created. Through this activity, students also had the opportunity to build relationships with Paul – a visitor to the class who did not have the history and familiarity with the children that Carolyn had established. Later, this melody and the melody of “Fire on the Mountain” were used to illustrate the qualities of an effective melody – steps vs. leaps, frequent use of patterns, highlighting the tonic and fifth, ending on the tonic, etc.

“Fire On the Mountain”

traditional Ozark Mountains tune

Fire on the moun - tain. Run, boys, run! You with the red coat, fol - low with the drum The
 drum shall beat and you shall run. Fire on the moun - tain, run — boys run!

D-La Pentatonic Melody

Cribari

Over the next 12 lessons, students worked on their melodies. Their first task was to choose whether their melody would be Do or La based. They were then given time to develop their ideas individually using an instrument. Many of the students were surprised by how difficult it was to find a melody that they liked and that creating a melody that pleased them took multiple edits and revisions!

S O A R These are the val - ues that we strive for.

S O A R Ar - row - head Thun - der - birds!

At the beginning of each class, students were given indications as to where they should be in the composition process as well as goals for the end of each period. At multiple points, students were asked to reflect on various aspects of the process. There were four prompts with varying methods of data collection:

Reflection	Prompt	Method
Reflection 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How has your image of a composer changed compared to the first class? 	Hand written reflection with option of drawing a picture
Reflection 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are you most excited about in this project? What are you worried about? 	Flipgrid
Reflection 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which aspect of this project is the most interesting to you? 	Sitcky notes on a chart paper
Reflection 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was your favorite part of this project? What was the most challenging part? Do you see yourself as a composer? 	Flipgrid

In addition to the information gathered through student reflections, in-class conversations with students, and anecdotal observations all served as formative assessments of the student’s successes, struggles, and needs for future lessons. This information informed planning sessions prior to the next class as we determined which students needed additional challenges (rigor), which needed individualized attention (engagement and asset-focused factors), and which students simply needed more time to cultivate or revise their ideas.

Once students were able to play their own melody, they were partnered with another student and given the opportunity to create a drone accompaniment that supported their melody. Those students who were able to meet this goal were further challenged to add one of the language *ostinati* to their piece.

At the beginning of this unit, we hoped to challenge the image we assumed many students held about what a composer looks like. Over the course of 12 classes we further sought to bring that image of a composer down to a more personal level. Through opportunities to interact with a composer (Paul), attempts to engage each student’s cultural identity, and time devoted to allowing the students to explore their own identities as musicians, most of our students did, in fact, identify themselves as a composer in their final reflections. For those who didn’t, the most common factor that prevented them from seeing themselves as composers was an inability to play their own melody in front of their peers – an interesting idea, given the fact that many composers may never hear their works performed!

Resources/References

Flipgrid.com

Lind V.R. & McKoy, C.L. (2016). *Culturally responsive teaching in music education*. New York: Routledge.

Stembridge, A. <http://www.myreflectionmatters.org/author/dr-adeyemi-stembridge/> Accessed 3, October 2018.

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Score



Home Note: _____ 5th _____

Musical notation in 4/4 time. The first four notes are quarter notes on a four-line staff, each with a horizontal line above it. The notes are on the first, second, third, and fourth lines. Below them are the letters S, O, A, and R. The fifth measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes on the second, third, and fourth lines, and a quarter rest. Below this sequence are the words "These are the val - ues that we strive for."

Musical notation in 4/4 time. The first four notes are quarter notes on a four-line staff, each with a horizontal line above it. The notes are on the first, second, third, and fourth lines. Below them are the letters S, O, A, and R. The fifth measure contains a sequence of eighth notes: a quarter rest, followed by eighth notes on the second, third, and fourth lines, and a quarter rest. Below this sequence are the words "Ar-row-head Thun-der-birds!". The piece ends with a double bar line.

Language(s) for Speech Ostinato: _____
