

8-2016

# Music, Community, and Cooperation in a Lower Elementary Classroom

Heidi S. James

*St. Catherine University*, [hsjames@stkate.edu](mailto:hsjames@stkate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed>

 Part of the [Curriculum and Instruction Commons](#), and the [Educational Methods Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

James, Heidi S.. (2016). Music, Community, and Cooperation in a Lower Elementary Classroom. Retrieved from Sophia, the St. Catherine University repository website: <https://sophia.stkate.edu/maed/175>

This Action Research Project is brought to you for free and open access by the Education at SOPHIA. It has been accepted for inclusion in Masters of Arts in Education Action Research Papers by an authorized administrator of SOPHIA. For more information, please contact [amshaw@stkate.edu](mailto:amshaw@stkate.edu).

# Music, Community, and Cooperation in a Lower Elementary Classroom

An Action Research Report  
By Heidi James

MUSIC, COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

Music, Community, and Cooperation in a Lower Elementary Classroom

Submitted on May 22, 2016

in fulfillment of final requirements for the MAED degree

St. Catherine University

St. Paul, Minnesota

Advisor: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: May 22, 2016

### Abstract

The following research assesses how daily singing and music in an elementary classroom impacted the sense of community, care of materials and cooperation during clean up time. This study involved daily singing of a set of songs with lyrical themes of cooperation and unity, and then playing of recorded versions of the same songs during clean up time. The eight-week study involved 16 participants between the ages of 6 and 9 at a private school in Minnesota. Each individual completed a pre and post-survey. During clean up time, observations of helpful behaviors were recorded, and any relevant quotations noted. Results of the surveys showed an increase in student enjoyment of group singing, and in the understanding of the terms “cooperation” and “community.” There was also an increase in observed helpful behaviors throughout the intervention, particularly in material care. Results show that daily group singing has a positive affect on building community, and increases cooperation levels while caring for materials. Further research may include using group singing to teach other topics such as environmental care, racial equality or academic subject matter.

The elementary-aged child is not often concerned with clutter. Their minds are busy exploring new ideas, researching vast amounts of information, imagining projects, and creating finished products to showcase their knowledge. In the same vein, elementary children are also very social and group-oriented. Their intellectual work happens in tandem with the social work of building and navigating friendships. Children in elementary classrooms are generally both busy-minded and blossoming socially. To bring these big-thinking, deep-feeling individuals together into a unified classroom community is vital, and there is no other time during the school day when the vitality of community becomes more apparent than clean up time.

Cleaning up after a full day in the classroom requires individual responsibility, group cooperation, and a unified sense of the common good. Invariably, someone has left behind a mess that they have forgotten about or have chosen not to address. Who then will take care of the mess? What is the expectation of all students in such a situation? What is the motivation for a student to care for a material that they did not use? A child must have incentive to assist with cleaning up things that they could otherwise deem “not theirs.”

As a classroom teacher I considered these questions and issues frequently. I often observed children walking past materials, stepping on them, and declining other children who asked for their help putting things away. As the teacher, I was constantly reminding and asking and pleading with students to attend to cleaning up. “That’s not mine” or “I wasn’t using that” was a common response to requests to help put away shared classroom materials. Clean up time took approximately 30 minutes or more to complete, which is a lengthy amount of time. The children were not self-sufficient in their tidying, requiring lots of reminders, repeated requests

care for certain materials, as well as redirection away from conversing with friends. Clean up was a very taxing time of day for the teacher and students alike and ending the days on such a note was discouraging.

I started to consider clean up time as a reflection of the sense of community in my classroom. If the children value their peers, their environment and the materials within their environment and see a link of common good, should not their care for materials and one another improve? Using a framework of cleanup representing a sense of community, I came to the conclusion that the classroom lacked strong group cohesion. Therefore, the problem I decided to solve was a perceived lack of community in the classroom, and to see stronger community reflected during clean up time. By building a stronger sense of community, the children could feel more connected, cooperative and responsible when caring for the classroom. Building classroom community could also enhance the children's overall enjoyment at school and forge stronger friendships, which would make not only clean up time more successful, but the rest of the school day too. The action research question I sought to consider was: What impact will the daily incorporation of singing and music have on an elementary classroom's sense of community, collective care of materials and cooperation during transition times?

The study examined the affect of implementing daily group singing time and playing recorded music during clean up time to address the problem of a perceived lack of community. Group singing is a way of community building that involves individual participation to create a beautiful unified outcome. It is a joyful group activity. The daily songs all featured lyrical themes of cooperation, friendship and kindness in order to further infuse the joyful act of group singing with a sense of community. At the end of each day during clean up time, recorded music

played as the children cleaned. The recorded songs included those sung during group singing time.

The study took place in a private school setting with a classroom size of 16 students ranging between first and third grade. The school is located outside of a large metro area in the Midwest. The participants have needs ranging from high-functioning autism, to selective mutism, anxiety, and ADHD. The participants were somewhat ethnically diverse, with representations of majority White students, as well as Asian, African American and American Indian students. The majority of the students were economically stable, and several come from affluent families. There were a handful of children that come from lower income households, or receive tuition assistance.

### **Review of Literature**

This review of literature examines effective methods for building peaceful communities and classrooms, and how music and shared music activities can assist and drive the development of peaceful communities. The review will begin with an analysis of literature focused on peaceful communities and how they are defined and built. Then the review will take a sharper focus on how music can build community. Because nearly all of the sources examined in this review of literature mention music in some way, examples and mentions of musical practices will be included.

### **Building Peaceable School Communities and Classrooms**

Many studies and articles cited how seemingly commonplace violence and injustice are in today's world, therefore placing importance upon cultivating peace within children. Brion-Meisels and Hoffman's (2007) work identified a need that schools and their greater communities should be peaceful and unified. They developed what is known as a "peaceable schools

framework” by which peaceable school communities are built using holistic guidelines. The framework begins with positive definitions of the self at the individual level, then promotes peace and justice through curriculum by examining the roots of justice and injustice in society. Democratic practices are then brought to the forefront with a focus on building community. Teachers can elicit participation from students when making classroom rules, planning the classroom layout, or crafting student assignments. Relationships between students grow and are assisted through conflict mediation, and relationships between the school and greater community blossom through partnerships and shared events. Ultimately these schools and communities will apply the idea of transformational leadership, which promotes interrelation and connectivity through sustained relationships. Moreover, transformational leadership also serves to honor the individual and acknowledge the roots of justice. In an example from the work of Brion-Meisels and Hoffman, an elementary school employing the peaceable schools framework began each school year with a community dinner, at which the entire group is celebrated through food, as well as shared experiences in music and the arts. The authors considered part of the promotion of peace and justice to include community activities such as singing and music making as a classroom/community.

Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2006), noted that one way to develop a peaceful classroom (specifically, their research took place in a Montessori classroom) is by establishing and teaching a “language of peace” (Stomfay-Stitz, p. 292-F). Such a language of peace develops through specific words and phrases used consistently. Examples of such words and phrases include, “May I play?”, “I’m sorry, excuse me.” Adults teach and model use of the phrases, and help prompt the children to use them. The root of the language of peace lies in teaching empathy and emphasizing the classroom community as a whole. By building an understanding of peaceful



language and learning how to apply it with their peers, children can more effectively and precisely relay their emotions and understand those belonging to another child. Thus, a shared vocabulary of peace creates a sense of community and increases effective communication of emotions.

According to Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler, a vocabulary of peace can be built through song and music. By singing songs bearing messages of peace together, the shared language of peaceable words grow, but the musical element offers another level of shared experience and a musical language.

The teacher also has a significant role in creating a peaceable school and culture of peace within the classroom. Hunter (2008) wrote that in order to create a culture of peace within a classroom, teachers must consider classroom design, engage in empathy and diversity training, highlight community awareness and practice conflict resolution. A classroom design that promotes peace features displayed values and beautiful finished work, a space to practice conflict mediation, materials to facilitate learning about peace concepts. Hunter's work supports that of Brion-Meisels and Hoffman (2007); her practice of empathy training in the classroom begins first with the individual, and training the individual to recognize their own emotions before trying to identify those of others. Hunter's work also supports that of Stomfay-Stitz and Wheeler (2006), as she notes that music is a method to build a shared language within the community. Hunter uses song to teach the children how approach conflict resolution in the classroom. The children learn a song and corresponding movements about how to resolve a conflict with a friend. By providing (through music) a shared experience and language for all the children on this topic, Hunter found that the social and emotional needs of her students were more supported and that her students were showing gained skills at working peacefully with others.

Part of the structure of a peaceful and harmonious school community has to do with student behavior and self-regulation. Lloyd (2008) examined the idea of students achieving the ability to self-regulate their own behavior. Lloyd used the Montessori educational philosophy and the idea of normalization to examine the concept of student attention and behavioral self-regulation. According to Montessori theory, the term “normalization” refers to the optimal functioning of an organism living life as it was meant to be lived. In a classroom setting, a normalized child demonstrates a love of order and work, deep concentration, obedience, independence, an ability to make judgments and to take initiative. Lloyd’s research considered the factors of the classroom environment, academic curriculum, as well as other factors that provide for the nurturing of several aspects of self-regulation. Lloyd interviewed 12 Montessori pedagogy trainers as experts on the subject. From her research, Lloyd delineated that there are four observable characteristics that are the outcomes of normalization: concentration, the love of work (being engaged in purposeful activity that requires effort), self-discipline and a refined sense of sociability, which include expressions of kindness and affection for others. Results of the study found that Montessori classrooms support normalization of children through many factors, including the classroom environment, materials, freedom to work and a focus on intrinsic motivation and independence. Lloyd found that Montessori’s idea of normalization and the more commonly accepted notion of self-regulation are quite similar. By employing the Montessori educational method, children can effectively learn self-regulation.

### **Building Classroom Community through Music**

While building peaceable individuals, communities and classrooms proves vital and relevant, there are other methods of positive individual and community building to consider. Examining the role of music and group participation in music activities lends another light under which to examine the idea of community building among children.

Harris (2008) examined the interplay between the Montessori classroom and musical instruction. She cited research that arts-enriched academic learning benefits children greatly, and that math test scores of children studying music are significantly higher than those who are not. Harris also pointed to research suggesting that Montessori education produces more academically prepared children. Harris also wrote that music and mathematics are interlinked, as music contains ratios and patterns, which align with mathematical reasoning. Music also requires other skills that involve cooperation, social interaction and motor movement. Harris included Montessori's educational theories, highlighting the idea that children retain information through experience, especially experience that is self-initiated. By laying out a basis of existing research, Harris makes the point that the interconnection of Montessori education coupled with music instruction and math education is a major frontier in educational progress. Harris conducted a study in which two groups of children, both of whom were receiving Montessori education. One of the groups received musically enriched Montessori instruction. The enriched music instruction occurred within the regular Montessori classroom setting, occurring in three half-hour sessions weekly. The program used techniques of music education theorist Zoltán Kodály to teach concepts of pitch, dynamics, duration, timbre and form. In addition, skills in movement, playing, listening and singing were taught. Pre and post-study math tests were administered and results showed that those children who received enriched musical instruction had higher test results in math than those who were enrolled in Montessori education alone.

Welte (2011) addressed the idea of defining and developing community within an elementary classroom. She conducted a study with novice teachers (those in their first year of full-time lead teaching) and their efforts to effectively define the idea of community and then build cooperative classroom of elementary age children. The researcher defined community as “a

group of individuals who share a vision...[community is] as much a feeling as it is a concrete entity” (p.12). Welte interviewed and met with a select group of novice teachers monthly throughout their first year of teaching. Welte provided some training to the novice teacher groups on how to build community using a method called collaborative inquiry, a form of action research in which the initiator creates a team of peers (the novice teachers) with whom they strive to answer a collectively important question together (what is community, and how do we build it in our classrooms?). During these meetings, the novice teachers planned, discussed and made plans of action around their question. The group examined different aspects of community throughout the year. The conclusion that Welte came to at the end of the study was that important aspects of community building include the students’ shared responsibility for the classroom environment, their sense of responsibility for themselves and their own individual desire to learn, and student service and cooperation among one another. Welte provided several examples of music as a facet of community building. In one example, a novice teacher discussed the success of composing a class song in a collaborative manner. The song contained the names of every child in the classroom and was sung frequently during the week. Other novice teachers liked the idea and decided to implement it in their own classrooms, all remarking upon its success in the enjoyment and cooperation of the classroom.

### **Positive Effects of Group Singing in a Classroom**

A great deal of research shows the benefits of participation in group singing, particularly taking into consideration the weight with which human cultures revere and value music. From the basic idea of human culture venerating music, a wealth of educational techniques, educational policy, and musical therapy and counseling have been developed to develop skills and cooperation amongst both young and old.

A study conducted by Jones (2014), notes that a lack of community or group synchrony in the elementary age level can be addressed through group music and movement to teach social skills. Jones considered the cultural importance of music in society, especially as a ritualistic medium. Jones observed two elementary music classrooms. She interviewed the teachers to determine their impetus behind lessons that integrated movement with music. The researcher also performed interviews with individual students about their opinions regarding their experiences during music class. Jones found through her interviews that musical play and music-movement pairings in a classroom act as microcosms of larger societal rituals that require cooperation, and therefore building community. Jones pointed to rituals such as dances at proms or weddings, singing lullabies to children, and participating in hymns or anthems as rituals of musicality. Thus she drew the connection that human culture values musicality as a social skill in its rituals. By teaching musicality in a classroom setting, children gain those social skills to apply among a larger scope of ritual culture.

Lamont, Daubney and Spruce (2012) conducted a study on the effects of singing as a classroom whole. The researchers examined seven different primary schools in England and used observational methods and interviews with teachers and administrators. The basis for their research emphasizes the importance of singing as having positive psychological and neurological effects. They note that singing has been linked to increased trust and cooperation. Their case studies of schools were of diverse kinds of experiences and approaches to singing with children. Their study took place after a nation-wide singing initiative occurred, and they aimed to address a perceived need to define effective singing practices in the classroom setting. Their research found that effective music making in the classroom required an enthusiastic leader, and committed regularity to the singing. Opportunities for children to sing outside of the classroom

(in other areas of the school) and outside of school itself also contributed to the success of singing practices and enthusiasm for singing.

A study conducted by Pasiali (2012) examined the practice of music therapy among families and how it supports mutual, reciprocal parent-child interactions. The families that participated were low-income and had increased risk and/or presence of maternal clinical depression. Pasiali administered, observed and videotaped music therapy sessions for four different families. She also conducted interviews and asked parents to keep journals throughout the study, which she reviewed. During the music therapy sessions, the families were offered musical instruments, used the instruments together, sang together, and improvised and engaged in music-movement activities together. The study found that musical interactions between parent and child increased harmonious communication and decreased impulsive behaviors in the children. Parents reported experiencing positive emotional connections with their children. Ultimately the musical therapy sessions offered a way to rehearse unique ways for the parents and children to connect with one another.

The relationship between recorded music and its effects on children's daily lives was considered in a study conducted by Vestad (2010) in Norway. Vestad examined how children (age 3 to 6) use recorded music in their daily lives through the use of CDs and MP3 players at their homes and in their day care facilities and kindergarten classrooms. The researcher visited day care and kindergarten classrooms, observed and conducted interviews, including a focus group with the children. Vestad found that in the kindergarten classroom setting, the children used the CD player to initiate play with one another and they together acted out imaginative interpretive movement and singing to accompany the music. The researcher proposes that by independently and playfully pairing movement with the recorded music, children are

experiencing it in a kinesthetic way. Ultimately Vestad claimed that this kinesthetic experience of music offers a more multifaceted knowledge of the music itself while providing more closely connected relationships between the children engaged in the kinesthetic listening.

The review of literature shows strong evidence that music activities have been used to successfully build strong and peaceful school communities. Studies reviewed show that musical interactions between people can increase positive communication and build community. Research also shows that group singing and playing recorded music in the classroom have educational benefit. There is a need to investigate further what the affects are of a daily group singing practice upon a sense of classroom community, and furthermore how this increased sense of community may be reflected during clean up time. Therefore, the research I conducted sought to explore the further ideas brought up in the literature review. My action research project explored the impact that daily incorporation of singing and music had on an elementary classroom's sense of community, collective care of materials and cooperation during transition times.

### **Methodology**

Each child took a pre-intervention survey prior to the eight weeks of data collection (see Appendix A). The pre-intervention surveys were filled out anonymously by each of the 16 students in the classroom. At the end of the eight-week intervention, students filled out the same survey again. The survey consisted of four questions, which I read aloud to the class before they filled out their responses. The survey questions asked the students four questions regarding their opinion on group singing, how they felt when singing as a group, and asked them to write down their definitions of the words "community" and "cooperation."

When the children filled out the survey, they were instructed to think for a few minutes about the questions and write down whatever they decided upon for their answers. Some children asked for my help, saying that they did not know the answers to some of the questions. I directed them to respond with any ideas they had, or that they could write “I don’t know” as a response. The group was given 10 minutes to fill out the survey. One student was absent on the day of the pre-survey administration, so that individual simply filled it when they returned to school.

After administering the pre-intervention survey, I instated daily group singing time for 10-15 minutes. Prior to the intervention, we had done some group singing as a class, but only sporadically. During the intervention, group singing took place every day before lunch and recess from 11:1a.m.-11:30 a.m. During group singing time, I taught the group different songs and we sang them together while I played ukulele for accompaniment. The song lyrics all had themes of community, positivity, and cooperation. The songs taught all came from the community songbook *Rise Up Singing*. Songs included “With a Little Help from my Friends” by the Beatles, “Keep on the Sunny Side” by the Carter Family, “Octopus’s Garden” by the Beatles, and “This Land is Your Land” by Woody Guthrie. Due to time constraints, we were not always able to sing all of the songs each day, but at least 2-3 songs from this selection were sung daily.

Once the songs were taught to the group, the children were welcome to move freely if they wanted to stand, dance, or perform actions to the songs. The expectations were that each child participated at their own comfort level, and that between songs they sat down quietly so that we could choose a new song to sing or learn the next song. The children would raise their hands to request songs to sing or the group would vote on the order songs sung. As the songs were taught, we discussed the meanings of the songs what the children thought the songs were



about, and we defined some words in the lyrics that might have been unfamiliar. I made general notes and took down quotations from these discussions.

Parallel with the instatement of daily group singing time, I started to play recorded versions of these same songs during clean up time at the end of the day. Playing recorded music during clean up is part of the classroom's regular routine. Throughout the course of the intervention, all (or nearly all) of these same songs that we sang were played during cleanup time. If cleanup time took longer, other songs not on the singing list were played. The iPod upon which the music was being played randomly chose these other songs.

During clean up time, I took general observation notes and used a tally sheet for observed behaviors (see Appendix A). There were three observed behaviors on the tally sheet. They were: caring for materials that do not belong to the child or were not their direct responsibility, helping another child clean up when asked, and helping another child clean up without being asked. I sat or walked around throughout clean up time and made tallies and observation notes.

During the school day, I also made general notes and recorded relevant quotations from informal conversations had by the children in the class with one another and with myself. These relevant quotations were generally in regards to ideas of community, helping one another, cleaning up and individual versus group responsibility.

At the end of the intervention I gave each child the post-survey, which contained the same questions as the pre-survey. The post-survey was also anonymous, and it was administered in the same manner as the pre-survey.

### **Analysis of Data**

The data for this research was collected over a six-week time span. The research began as I administered the pre-intervention survey, implemented daily group singing and began playing

recorded music of the daily singing songs. I tallied observed behaviors daily during clean up time, and recorded any significant observations or conversations throughout the day. At the end of the six weeks, the children took the post-intervention survey, which was identical to the pre-survey.

I analyzed the results from the pre- and post-survey by each question. Responses to the first two questions were coded as positive, negative, or neutral. Responses to the last two questions were coded as having a clear idea of the concept, or an unclear or unknown idea of the concept.

First I examined the pre-survey results. The questions on the survey asked: Do you like singing as a group? How do you feel when we sing together as a class? What does cooperation mean to you? What does it mean to be a community? In response to the first question, “Do you like singing as a group?,” there were two negative responses (no) out of 16, or 12.5% of the class. There were 9 positive responses (yes) out of 16, or 56% of the class. There were 3 in-between responses (sort of, kind of) out of 16, or 19% (see Table 1).

**Pre-survey: “Do you like singing as a group?”**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Negative	2	12.5%
Positive	9	56%
Neutral	3	19%

*Table 1.* Pre-Survey, Question 1: Responses

The second question on the pre-survey was “How do you feel when we sing together as a class?” Fifteen out of the 16 responses were positive, including responses of “good,” “happy,” and “nice,” totaling 94% positive responses. Only one response out of 16 was not definitively positive, with “sometimes good” providing for 6% of a neutral response (see Table 2).

**Pre-survey: “How do you feel when we sing together as a class?”**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Positive	15	94%
Neutral	1	6%
Negative	0	0%

*Table 2. Pre-Survey, Question 2: Responses*

For the third and fourth questions on the pre-survey, responses were coded as having a clear idea of the concept or having an unclear/unknown idea of the concept. The coding was the same for unclear/unknown responses. The third question asked, “What does cooperation mean to you?” Responses varied greatly, including “to explain,” “to like someone”, “focus.” Responses that were coded as having a clear idea of the concept of cooperation included words that had to do with team work, helping others, working together, and demonstrated a theme of group effort. There were two responses out of 16 that had a clear idea of the concept of cooperation, for a total of 12.5%. The rest of the responses either did not align with a clear idea of the concept, or responded with “I don’t know” or a question mark. The unclear response examples included, “yes” or “I think so.” These unclear responses did not answer the question and demonstrated that the participant lacked understanding of the question or word, which is why they were coded in the same category as the unknown responses. That meant that 14 out of 16, or 87.5% did not have a clear idea of the concept of cooperation (see Table 3).

**Pre-survey: “What does cooperation mean to you?”**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	2	12.5%
Unknown/ Unclear Idea	14	87.5%

*Table 3. Pre-Survey, Question 3: Responses*

For the fourth question, “What does it mean to be a community?,” there were 6 out of 16 responses that had a clear idea of the concept, or 37.5%. Responses that showed an unclear or unknown idea of the concept were 10 out of 16, or 62.5% (see Table 4).

**Pre-Survey: “What does it mean to be a community?”**

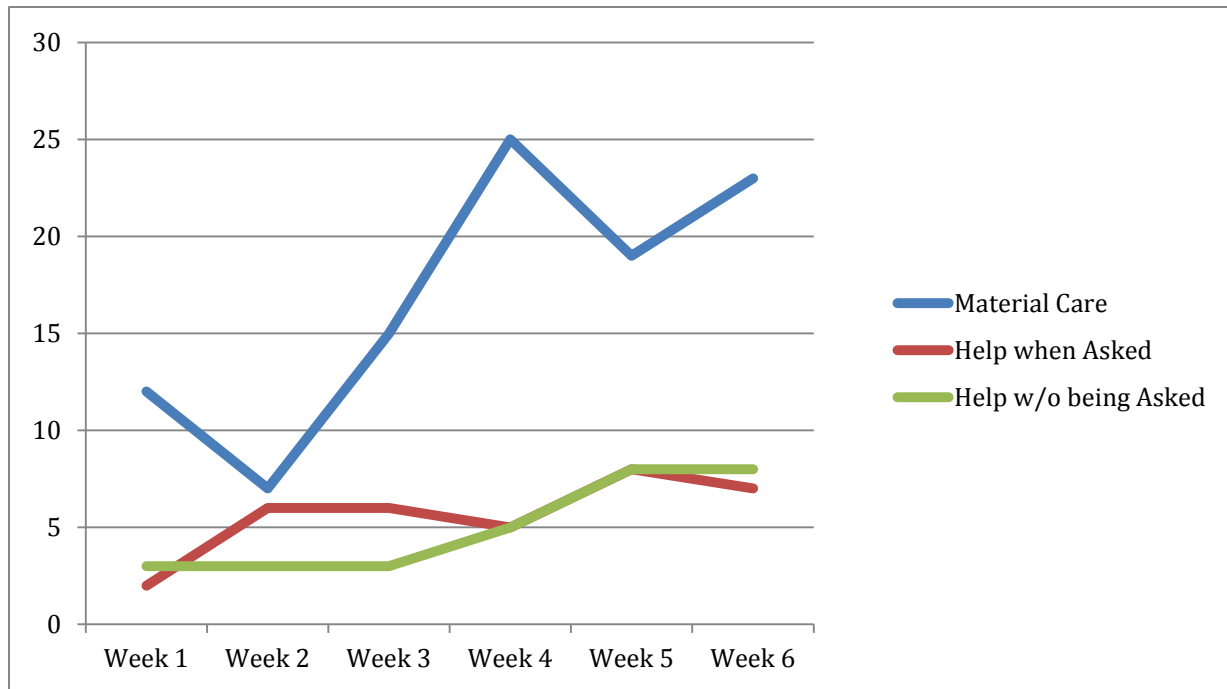
Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	6	37.5%
Unclear/Unknown	10	62.5%

*Table 4. Pre-Survey, Question 4: Responses*

**Behavior Observations**

During the intervention, daily observations of certain behaviors were made during clean up time while recorded music was played. I played recorded versions of the same collection of songs that we sang during group singing in the morning. I used a tally sheet (see Appendix A) to record each time a certain behavior was observed. The behaviors observed were: caring for materials that do not belong to the child/are not their direct responsibility (condensed as “material care” on data graph to follow); helping another child when asked; and helping another child without being asked.

Data totals for each behavior for each week were compiled into a graph showing the rate of each behavior’s occurrence over the course of the six weeks (see Figure 1).



*Figure 1. Clean Up Time Observed Behaviors*

To analyze the data, I took the total difference between tallies for each behavior being observed and divided it by the number of total behavior occurrences observed within the category. The increase in material care went up 11% over the course of the intervention. Providing help when asked increased 15%, and providing help without being asked increased 17%.

### **Post-Survey Results**

Post-survey results were analyzed in the same manner as the pre-survey. For ease of examination, I have included the post-survey results side-by-side with the pre-survey results below. For the first question about whether the children like singing as a group, results from pre-survey to post-survey changed slightly. There were no negative responses, whereas in the pre-survey there were 2 negative responses. There were 14 positive responses, which was an increase from 9. There were 2 neutral responses, which was a decrease from 3 in the pre-survey (see Tables 5-8).

**“Do you like singing as a group?”**

**Pre-survey**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Negative	2	12.5%
Positive	9	56%
Neutral	3	19%

**Post-survey**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Negative	0	0%
Positive	14	87.5%
Neutral	2	12.5%

*Table 5. Comparison of Pre and Post-Survey, Question 1*

**“How do you feel when we sing together as a class?”**

**Pre-Survey**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Positive	15	94%
Neutral	1	6%

**Post-survey:**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Positive	15	94%
Neutral	1	6%

*Table 6. Comparison of Pre and Post-Survey, Question 2*

**“What does cooperation mean to you?”**

**Pre-survey:**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	2	12.5%
Unknown/Unclear Idea	14	87.5%

**Post-survey:**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	9	56%
Unknown/Unclear Idea	7	44%

*Table 7. Comparison of Pre and Post-Survey, Question 3*

**“What does it mean to be a community?”****Pre-Survey:**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	6	37.5%
Unclear/ Unknown	10	62.5%

**Post-Survey:**

Response:	Number of Responses:	Percentage of Class
Clear Idea	12	75%
Unclear/ Unknown	4	25%

*Table 8. Comparison of Pre and Post-Survey, Question 4***Qualitative Observation Notes**

Throughout the six-week intervention, daily observation notes were made regarding actions or conversations of children in relation to cooperation, community, singing and cleaning up the classroom. Observation notes were coded to examine the following themes (quotations in parenthesis are actual quotes recorded during my observations):

- 1) Frustration expressed due to lack of help from others (i.e. “Why isn’t anyone helping me?”)
- 2) Frustration expressed due to other’s lack of responsibility (i.e. “I’m not going to pick up something that isn’t my work”).
- 3) Verbal expression of helping peers (i.e. “I put this away for you.”)
- 4) Expression of needing help from peers (i.e. “The floor sweeper broke, can you help me?”)
- 5) Verbal expression of positive interaction with recorded music (i.e. “I love this song!” or singing aloud/dancing to music).

Throughout the course of the six weeks, these observation notes were the hardest to make consistently due to time constraints and interruptions to my taking detailed observation notes

(see Table 9). Approximately 10 minutes throughout the day was spent making observations.

Some days observations did not happen due to classroom needs or absence on my part. Roughly 6 days of observation were missed.

Coded Observation	Number of Observed Instances
(1) Frustration over lack of help	8
(2) Frustration over lack of other's responsibility	9
(3) Helping peers	12
(4) Expression of needing help from peers	9
(5) Expression or positive interaction with recorded music	33

*Table 9. Qualitative Coded Behavior Observations*

### **Conclusion**

The data collected from this intervention shows that there was a marked increase in nearly all of the factors being measured. From pre-survey to post-survey, there was an increase in positive responses about group singing by 31.5%. There was no change when it came to responses about how the children felt during singing time. Those responses were 94% positive and remained so. In regards to having an understanding of the concepts of cooperation and community, increases also occurred from pre- to post-survey. Having a clear understanding of the term “cooperation” increased by 43.5%. Having a clear understanding of the term “community” increased by 37.5%.

Furthermore, the graph of observed behaviors shows increases in helpful behaviors during the intervention. The increases occurred with behaviors of material care, helping others when asked, and helping other without being asked. The largest increase in helpful behavior occurrence was with material care.



The qualitative data shows that children were expressive both of their need for help from their peers and their frustrations when their peers were not perceived as being helpful or responsible during classroom clean up time. The qualitative data also shows that during the intervention, there were recorded verbal interactions of helping one another throughout the day, as well as many positive reactions to recorded music being played during clean up time.

Some factors that may have affected the data include the amount of data taken in. Because of some missed days of data recording due to absence of extraneous classroom circumstances, the data may be thin on quantity to provide a truly robust data set.

The data shows that the intervention was successful at increasing positive experiences during group singing, and increased understanding of the ideas of cooperation and community. The data also shows an improvement in the amount of material care, and helping one another during the classroom clean up time.

### **Action Plan**

The data from this research shows that the daily incorporation of singing and music positively impacted the classroom's sense of community, collective care of materials and cooperation during clean up time.

The collected data from the interventions showed an improvement in the classroom's sense of community through various factors. One factor was an increase in the children's understanding of the words "cooperation" and "community." The data confirms that because more children understood these key words, it positively affected the sense classroom community and levels of cooperation.

The children came to learn the meanings of the words "cooperation" and "community" through the songs sung as a class. The songs provided a fun, indirect way of introducing and

defining these ideas to the children. By singing these songs daily and hearing them again during clean up time, the songs reinforced the key ideas present in their lyrics. The data also showed a small increase in student enjoyment of group singing as an activity, which is another positive aspect of implementing group singing as a community-building activity.

Behavior analysis data throughout the intervention sought to track helpful behaviors during clean up time with recorded music playing. Helpful behaviors increased overall throughout the intervention. The children greatly enjoyed having recorded music played during clean up time, and qualitative data showed that they would often sing along with the recordings of group singing songs, as well as dance to the music as they cleaned. Qualitative data also showed that the children talked to each other about cooperation and working together as they cleaned.

I believe that it is because the children had a better understanding of concepts of cooperation as presented through the group singing songs, they were able to better communicate to one another what they needed to achieve a successful clean up. The songs helped provide a vocabulary of cooperation and community that contributed to the success of cleanup time.

It is very possible that the intervention has impacted student learning in the classroom. The intervention was not implemented with the direct goal of improving their academics. However, because the group singing practice has improved the sense of community, active cooperation and clean up practices, those improvements will inform other areas of classroom life. It will certainly make it easier for students to work together on projects in the classroom. I also hope that smaller-scale clean up endeavors will be more successful due to the vocabulary of cooperation that they have gained through group singing. If less time and energy is spent

negotiating or mediating disagreements amongst small groups as they try to work together or clean up together, this creates more time and energy for academic focus.

As a result of the implementation of the intervention, I will continue the daily practice of group singing in the classroom. I plan to teach the class more songs along the same theme of cooperation and community. I will continue to play recorded music during clean up time, and add recordings of other songs as we learn them. The children frequently express their excitement for singing time. During the course of the intervention, we had to skip a handful of group singing times due to schedule conflicts or due to my absence from the classroom. I heard a lot of feedback from my students about their disappointment that we had to miss a singing session. Group singing is a positive, enjoyable group activity for the classroom.

The research helped demonstrate to me that the songs and discussions about the songs helped create a stronger understanding of the topics present in the lyrics. The lyrics provided a vocabulary for the children to communicate about these topics. Because of the success of the intervention, I plan to use group singing to teach songs with topics including caring for the earth's environment, racial equality, and peaceful resolution. Further ideas include more specific academic topics such as songs containing math facts, state capitals, or parts of speech. These ideas could be ideas for further action research investigation.

At the very end of the intervention, the teacher of the primary classroom next door (ages 3-6) asked to join our classroom singing time once a week on Fridays. We have been including the class of younger children in our Friday singing time for several weeks now, whereas before we had very little interaction with the younger classroom. I believe that as a result of the intervention, the sense of community not only in our own classroom has improved, but has increased to include the neighboring classroom as well. Such a development also presents an

opportunity for further action research investigation. One could investigate whether group singing also has the same affect on classroom community and clean up among the younger ages, or how group singing across classrooms and age levels affect a sense of community within the school.

## MUSIC, COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

### References

- Brion-Meisels, L., Brion-Meisels, S., & Hoffman, C. (2007). Creating and sustaining peaceable school communities. *Harvard Educational Review*, 77(3), 374-379, 391-392. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/212291933?accountid=26879>
- Stomfay-Stitz, A., & Wheeler, E. (2006). Language of peace in the peaceful classroom. *Childhood Education*, 82(5), 2-292F,292M. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/210393328?accountid=26879>
- Hunter, T. J. (2008). Creating a culture of peace in the elementary classroom. *The Education Digest*, 74(1), 54-58. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/218177790?accountid=26879>
- Lloyd, K. M. (2008). An analysis of Maria Montessori's theory of normalization in light of emerging research in self-regulation(Order No. 3326413). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/304503369?accountid=26879>
- Harris, M. (2008). The effects of music instruction on learning in the Montessori classroom. *Montessori Life*, 20(3), 24-31. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/219944465?accountid=26879>
- Welte, L. G. (2011). Orchestrating classrooms: A collaborative inquiry study of novice teacher community building (Order No. 3445400). Available from ProQuest Education Journals. (861325030). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/861325030?accountid=26879>
- Jones, M. D. (2014). Movement in the elementary music classroom: Good citizenship in action(s) (Order No. 1559537). Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1560289478). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1560289478?accountid=26879>

## MUSIC, COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

Lamont, A., Daubney, A., & Spruce, G. (2012). Singing in primary schools: Case studies of good practice in whole class vocal tuition. *British Journal of Music Education*, 29(2), 251-268. doi:<http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0265051712000083>

Pasiali, Varvara, PhD., M.T.-B.C. (2012). Supporting parent-child interactions: Music therapy as an intervention for promoting mutually responsive orientation. *Journal of Music Therapy*, 49(3), 303-34. Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1181172076?accountid=26879>

Vestad, I. L. (2010). To play a soundtrack: how children use recorded music in their everyday lives. *Music Education Research*, 12(3), 243-255. doi:10.1080/14613808.2010.504811

# MUSIC, COMMUNITY AND COOPERATION

## Appendix A

### Surveys and Tally Sheets

#### Pre and post-study questionnaire

Do you like singing as a group?

How do you feel when we sing together as a class?

What does cooperation mean to you?

What does it mean to be a community?

#### Observed Behaviors Tally Sheet

Date: \_\_/\_\_/\_\_

Caring for materials that do not belong to the child/are not their direct responsibility:

Helping another child when asked

Helping another child without being asked