MUSIC, COMMUNITY, AND COOPERATION IN A LOWER ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

An Action Research Report
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What impact will daily incorporation of singing and music have on a classroom’s sense of community, collective care of materials and cooperation during clean up time?
LITERATURE REVIEW

- Building Peaceable Communities & Classrooms
  - Community Built through Culture & Language of Peace

- Building Classroom Community through Music
  - Classroom Community Building Facets

- Positive Effects of Music/Group Singing in Classrooms
  - Microcosms of societal rituals
  - Enthusiasm for singing
  - Builds positive emotional connections between participants
  - Recorded music increases social interaction, kinesthetic listening
BACKGROUND

- **Participants**
  - 16 students, ages 6-9
  - Private Montessori school, suburban setting

- **Purpose of Action Research Project**
  - Assess affect on:
    - Sense of community within the classroom
    - Demonstrated understanding of cooperation and helpful behaviors
10-15 minutes daily

Taught songs from “Rise Up Singing”

- Keep on the Sunny Side (The Carter Family)
- With a Little Help from My Friends (The Beatles)
- Octopus’s Garden (The Beatles)
- This Land is Your Land (Woody Guthrie)
- Moonshadow (Cat Stevens)

- Discussed lyrics, meaning within songs
- End of the day: Clean up
DATA SOURCES

- **Pre- and post-survey**

- **Observed behavior tally**
  - **During clean up**
    - Caring for materials that were not the direct responsibility of the child
    - Helping someone clean up when asked (by another child)
    - Helping another child clean up without being asked

- **Teacher observation notes**

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**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?
Survey Results
- 31% Increase in enjoyment of group singing
- 44% increase in understanding of “cooperation”
- 38% increase in understanding of “community”

Behavior Tally Results
## Qualitative Data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coded Observation</th>
<th>Number of Observed Instances</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Frustration over lack of help</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Frustration over lack of other’s responsibility</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Helping peers</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Expression of needing help from peers</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Expression or positive interaction with recorded music</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CONCLUSION

- Students enjoy group singing
- Group singing positively affected the level of community, cooperation and care for materials in the classroom.

- Continuation of group singing in the classroom
  - Singing with other classrooms

- Further Ideas for research using group singing:
  - Teaching more key ideas
  - Teaching academic topics through song
QUESTIONS OR COMMENTS?