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Angelina Davis

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**Music isn't Just a Special: Amplifying Music's Power in Fostering Social-Emotional Skills
in Students**

Angelina Davis

Liberal Studies Department, California State University Monterey Bay

Abstract

For this Capstone Project, the researcher investigated how Dream Academy and Little Foot Elementary educators view music's impacts on social-emotional learning and what they thought could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher used what they have learned to formulate an action that responds to the impact of music on social-emotional learning in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience. This is an important issue for students and teachers because music education allows educators to teach social-emotional skills. It is argued that music fosters social-emotional skills. Four primary stakeholders were selected: Gaia and Chloe from Little Foot Elementary for their music and performance backgrounds, and Athena and Andreas due to their musical backgrounds and work at an art academy. Three themes emerged from the data and were explored as ways to address the issue presented. Making music-integrated lesson plans that are culturally responsive and SEL-based is argued to be the most effective way to achieve the goals of fostering social-emotional learning through music and being culturally responsive.

Music isn't Just a Special: Amplifying Music's Power in Fostering Social-Emotional Skills in Students

Growing up in a single-parent household can be difficult for any child. It can be more complicated when they do not have an outlet to make themselves feel like they can do anything.

I got my art and music education in elementary school through my primary teacher or a parent volunteer until third grade. In third grade, I got the opportunity to sing in choir. Then, in fourth grade, I got the dreaded recorder and got to just look at different instruments. By fifth grade, I could choose between choir and concert band. I chose choir. Choir gave me joy and confidence. I got to sing with my best friend, our group cheered each other on, we got to choose the songs we wanted to sing at the end of the year, and most of all, I could think about the songs I was singing instead of what was happening at home. On top of being raised in a single-parent, low-income household, our family was also having issues with Child Protective Services from the time I was in kindergarten to fourth grade. While choir helped me, I wish I had more opportunities during the early years of my elementary education to express myself through art and music. Only when I was in high school and joined the color guard did I begin to shine.

I was in color guard in the marching band in my high school for all four years. Throughout my time, I learned so much about fostering a community, gaining confidence, and having responsibility. My color guard instructor helped boost my confidence and everyone on the team. He made us feel powerful in what we did and taught us “soft skills” along with our many spinning techniques. He helped us work as a team by folding the vinyl tarp that acts as our dance floor and stage piece for our shows, doing routines that made us trust each other, and keeping us in check when we were all fighting. Because there was tension with some teammates, he gave us jobs and responsibilities to ensure our competition days would go smoothly. We would also take

turns carrying everything off the field and helping the drum pit every practice. Although I never played an instrument, I had to learn about rhythm, beats, marching, and working with the band. These experiences through marching band helped mold me into the person I am today. I have appreciated everyone I got to work with and still talk to many of my friends I made through the program today.

In my last year of community college, I did service learning for a local elementary school in my area. I helped in a fifth-grade classroom. Although I did not get to know these students well, I got to take them to their music class and sit in and observe. I saw something pretty magical. They worked together with all kinds of instruments to make a song. Students also got to show their talent to the class. I remember one student in particular who was not the most confident kid, but he got to play piano in front of the class. He shined when he finished, and everyone clapped. Observing the profound impact of music education on the young students in my community further solidified my belief in its power to nurture social-emotional well-being.

In November of 2023, the drum instructor of the marching band passed away from cancer. Although he was not a massive part of my color guard and high school career, he was a great instructor I got to know personally when we had our free time at practice and when I was an instructor. When it was time for his celebration of life, I saw these students who would usually be quiet in the classroom and never speak up, be loud and confident (this was always something I loved about marching band). Despite his untimely passing, it served as a testament to the lasting influence one person can have on the lives of countless students through music. I am proud to say that I got to work with him, so I am dedicating my research to improving music's impact on social-emotional learning.

Literature Synthesis

Music education has a profound impact on social-emotional learning (SEL). Music education, as defined by the California Department of Education (CDE, 2019), encompasses teaching individuals how to create, perform, and respond to music. Research by Edgar (2013), Küpana (2015), and Váradi (2022) emphasizes the transformative influence of music education on SEL, fostering positive relationships, self-management, self-awareness, awareness of others, and responsible decision-making. Through engaging in music-related activities, individuals develop a sense of accomplishment, teamwork, communication, critical thinking, and emotional intelligence, all of which are essential components of SEL (Edgar, 2020). Thus, music education emerges as a dynamic platform for nurturing social-emotional skills, contributing significantly to personal and interpersonal development.

There are five specific skills and qualities that the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) defines as SEL skills (Mahoney et al., 2020, cited in Váradi, 2022). Self-awareness involves recognizing and understanding one's emotions and behaviors, while self-management aids in regulating thoughts and emotions for adaptability and reliability. Social awareness fosters empathy and understanding of diverse perspectives, while relationship skills promote collaboration and communication. Responsible decision-making involves analyzing situations and making choices considering others (Edgar, 2013; Küpana, 2015; Váradi, 2022). The link between music education and SEL underscores their impact on mental health and trauma recovery (Lloyd, 2021). California's recognition of this connection is evident in established standards and bills (California Legislature, 2023; CASEL, 2024).

Other countries, notably Japan and Finland, recognize the transformative power of music in social and emotional learning. In Japan, the Yamaha Music Foundation promotes autonomy,

independence, cooperation, empathy, and compassion (Wakiya, n.d.). Similarly, Finland incorporates non-traditional and modern music alongside traditional folk music, tailoring lessons to students' interests (Safari, 2021). Both countries prioritize creativity and freedom of expression through diverse instrument playing, fostering collaborative and individual growth, thus reinforcing the thesis of music's impact on SEL. Despite the extensive research, there is still much to learn to enhance music education and its impacts on SEL. To enhance students' mental health, well-being, and personal growth comprehensively, we must prioritize gaining a deeper understanding of how we can enhance both music education and SEL.

Why is it an Opportunity?

Music impacts social-emotional intelligence. Music education can help students develop emotional intelligence by assessing and expressing emotions, understanding and controlling them, and developing empathy and social interaction (Küpana, 2015). Social-emotional learning teaches us that our emotions are important and how we control them helps us interact socially. Other countries, like Japan, agree. Japan's Yamaha Music Foundation believes SEL comes in two categories: oneself and sociability. Students learn how to control themselves and have autonomy and independence. They also learn to be cooperative with others and show empathy and compassion (Wakiya, n.d.). By integrating emotional intelligence development into music education, students learn to navigate complex emotional landscapes, enhancing their capacity to form meaningful relationships, build resilience, and thrive in various social contexts. This holistic approach contributes to their well-being and personal growth and enhances their academic success. In Blasco-Magraner et al.'s (2021) study, 42.31% of students between the ages of three and twelve showed improvements in mathematics and linguistics, motivation, values, and creativity. Because of SEL skills like self-awareness, self-management, and responsible

decision-making that music education provides, students pick up on deductive reasoning, creativity, linguistics, and analyzing. This helps foster confidence, resiliency, and intrinsic motivation (Hutton, 2021). Music and music education help with social-emotional development, which in turn helps students with their own educational goals.

Music significantly impacts mental health and aids in healing from trauma, as evidenced by Lloyd's (2021) research. Lloyd's research found that traumatized children often face challenges such as processing instructions, self-doubt, and executive dysfunction. Music education helps by fostering connections, promoting emotional growth through personal responsibility, and sharing goals (Lloyd, 2021). This has a powerful influence on students who have experienced trauma. Using music to connect with others and build substantial relationships with them and oneself shows music's capability for social-emotional development. Music also helps students with depression and trauma recognize and express their emotions as well as manage them. Váradi (2022) cited a study by Wilhelm K., Gillis I., Schubert E., and Whittle E. L. (2013), which showed that depressed individuals show and express their emotions by listening to music. He also stated that other studies on depressed adolescents showed that music boosted their self-confidence, enhanced positive emotions, and regulated their emotions. The studies show that music is an enormous benefactor in making positive relationships, being aware of one's emotions, and being able to regulate those emotions. Music can help students with trauma heal through its social-emotional learning benefits.

What Has and/or Should Be Done?

Music education and social-emotional learning are treasured globally. In Japan and Finland, they value fostering their students' way of learning through SEL and music. Both countries help their students be creative and have freedom of expression by allowing them to

play different instruments (Wakiya, n.d.; Safari, 2021). In Japan, they are not only learning artists like Mozart. They are making music fun. According to Wakiya (n.d.), Yamaha Music School combines individual creativity with collaborative group lessons. This combination allows students to grow their unique talents while learning to synchronize and perform with friends. The ensemble experiences and opportunities to appreciate peers' performances contribute to a rich and engaging music education. Finland has a similar curriculum. Finland has added non-traditional and modern music along with traditional folk music. They also develop their lessons based on their students' interests (Safari, 2021). Being equitable in students' learning and interests allows them to show their social-emotional intelligence through social and self-awareness and responsible decision-making skills. In countries like Finland and Japan, they look at the whole child and can teach them SEL skills through music.

The laws and policies that are in place in the United States and California show progress in the development of not only social-emotional learning but also music education. Federal policies play a role in social-emotional learning, as the American Rescue Plan (ARP) and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) share critical factors related to SEL (CASEL, 2024). ARP focuses on student and teacher well-being and having more inclusive and equitable learning environments. ESSA ensures that every student gets a high-quality education through funding efforts such as social, emotional, academic, and civic/career (CASEL, 2024). These policies make it easier to implement social-emotional learning but do not necessarily enforce it to happen. The California Art State Standards (CDE, 2019) promote accessibility and equity in the arts, making it easier to incorporate SEL. Students learn how to create, perform, and respond to music, and within those three standards, they can analyze, refine, and synthesize what they have learned. These standards fall into social-emotional learning, allowing them to think critically

about their interests and experiences. For example, Music's Responding-Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and Analyze Artistic Work for Second-Grade (2.MU:Re7.1) states, "Explain and demonstrate how personal interests and experiences influence musical selection for specific purposes" (CDE, 2019, p. 100). Unfortunately, these state standards are getting more complicated to study due to a lack of funding. However, in 2022, California passed Proposition 28 and created The Arts and Music in Schools—Funding Guarantee and Accountability Act. The Act provides a minimum source of annual funding to K-12 public schools for arts education programs. This policy makes it slightly easier to ensure disadvantaged students can participate in the arts, including music. All the laws, standards, and policies make it easier for music education and SEL to exist. Regardless, there is still much work to do to ensure we can intertwine them and incorporate them into the educational system.

Students need music education and social-emotional learning in their schooling, which is essential, yet much work is needed to ensure they receive it fully. According to Edgar (2020), to effectively impact SEL with music education, we need to ensure that all elements of SEL are involved. Through self-awareness, students should be able to realize the value of music through personal and collective experiences; students should understand how these values are perceived through social awareness and promote advocacy through responsible decision-making (Edgar, 2020). Studies conducted by Hutton (2021) and Lloyd (2021) revealed that music teachers need more professional development opportunities to address social-emotional learning in their curriculum effectively. These studies demonstrate that music educators currently need more awareness and training regarding SEL integration, emphasizing the importance of enhancing professional development initiatives in this area.

More research is needed on incorporating other cultures into music education and social-emotional learning. Additionally, teachers must be more culturally responsive to facilitate social-emotional learning through music education. When listening to and playing various types of music from different cultures, students will embrace different cultures and accept their differences by becoming familiar with their different musical traditions (Küpana, 2015; Váradi, 2022). Therefore, teachers should incorporate music from various cultures to bring empathy into the classroom and confidence for the students who share those cultures. Teachers should also be culturally responsive. Hutton (2021) suggests that they must be responsible for creating a positive learning environment and valuable student-teacher relationships with their students, especially in a culturally diverse classroom. Teachers must care about the cultures of their students. Being culturally responsive and incorporating other cultures in the classroom gives an advantage to social-emotional learning skills.

Conclusion

Music education positively influences social-emotional learning, aiding students with trauma through fostering positive relationships and self-awareness. Enhanced emotional intelligence from music correlates with academic success. While progress is evident in California and the U.S., further integration of SEL and culturally responsive teaching in music teacher professional development is crucial for maximizing students' social-emotional intelligence and overall well-being.

Method

For this Capstone Project, the researcher investigated how local elementary school educators view music's impacts on social-emotional learning and what they think could be done to improve it. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, the researcher

used what they have learned to formulate an action that responds to the impact of music on social-emotional learning in a way that inspires, informs, or involves a particular audience.

Context

Beach City County.¹ Beach City County is located on the California coast. It has a population of 430,723 as of July 2023. Beach City has a population of 29,571, with 64.6% of the population White and 19.3% Hispanic or Latino. This study focuses on two schools in the area. This study researched Little Foot Elementary in Beach City and Dream Academy in Oceanview. Both schools fall under the same school district, Beach City Unified School District (BCUSD). BCUSD serves TK-Adult. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students make up 65.4% of the population, and 22% experience youth homelessness. Of the district's 9,349 students, 5,796 are Hispanic or Latino, and 2,646 are English Learners. Students with disabilities also make up 13% of the population. Seven elementary schools go from TK to sixth grade, and three from TK to eighth grade.

Little Foot Elementary

Little Foot Elementary School is located in a military housing neighborhood, so many students have families stationed in Beach City County. They serve students from TK-8th. Little Foot Elementary, a relatively small school that experiences fluctuations in size due to the presence of military families, reported a student population of 564 in 2023. The average class size is 14 students for K-6. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students make up 28.4% of the population, and 4.6% experience youth homelessness. Of the school's 564 students, 29.4% are Hispanic or Latino, and 21.8% are English Learners. Seventy-two students are reported to have a disability. There are 34 classrooms, three of which are portable. Some classrooms also have

¹ "Pseudonyms have been used for the names of people, places, and organizations."

connecting doors. One of the three portables is the music classroom that each class uses once a week.

Participants and Participant Selection

I interviewed two participants who work at Little Foot Elementary: a first-grade teacher and a music teacher. **Gaia** is a white female first-grade teacher at Little Foot Elementary. She has a background in performing arts and integrates arts in the classroom. **Chloe** is a white female music teacher. She is working on her master's degree in music.

Dream Academy

The school uses art as a building block in the students' learning. The average class size is 14 students for K-6. Socioeconomically disadvantaged students make up 91.8% of the population, and 158 students experience youth homelessness. Of the school's 564 students, 84.4% are Hispanic or Latino, and 59.2% are English Learners. 17% of students are reported to have a disability. The music classroom is a large room with high ceilings, which you would see as a typical music room. The school is colorful with rainbow arches in the main hallway and highlights their namesake, Dr. MLK Jr., with bright murals of him.

Participants and Participant Selection

I interviewed two participants who work at Dream Academy: a principal and a music teacher. **Andreas** is a male principal at Dream Academy. He also has a background in music and used to teach it to high schoolers. **Athena** is a white female music teacher. She performed much music in high school and got her degree in music in college.

Researcher

I am a 25-year-old female who grew up in a low-income, single-parent household. My lifelong passion for art and music began at a young age, as I participated in choir from fifth to seventh grade and colorguard throughout high school. I have always considered music important to education because you can use it for any subject area. I discovered the connection between arts integration and social-emotional learning during my Arts in the Community course. Going into this research, I thought about how music affects race, social class, mental health and ability, and education. As I progressed through my research, I encountered unexpected insights that challenged my initial assumptions, ultimately broadening my perspective on the impact of music education. The schools I studied provided valuable information on the role of music and arts in different educational settings.

Semi-Structured Interview and Survey Questions

1. What do you see as the challenges with teaching social-emotional learning through music?
2. Based on your experiences, why teach music?
3. What is currently being done to improve music's impacts on social-emotional learning - by whom - and what are the strengths and weaknesses of these efforts?
4. What do you think should be done to improve music education's impacts on social-emotional learning?
5. What do you think are the challenges to improving music education's impacts on social-emotional learning?
6. How do various demographic groups experience music education when its impacts on

social-emotional learning?

7. Is there anything else you want to say about improving music education and social-emotional learning?

Procedure²

Participants were interviewed face to face individually. When it was not possible to interview participants in person, they were invited to complete a phone interview or paper and pencil survey of the same questions. Face-to-face interviews took less than one hour, were audio-recorded (with participant consent), and occurred in Elementary Schools. A semi-structured interview format was used for face-to-face interviews, allowing follow-up questions for unclear, interesting, or unexpected responses. All interviews/surveys were scheduled at the convenience of the interviewee and took approximately 15 minutes to complete.

Data Analysis

Transcribed interviews were coded and analyzed for emergent themes.

Results

For this Capstone Project, educators from Little Foot Elementary and Dream Academy were interviewed to see what they thought could improve music education's impact on social-emotional learning. This is an important issue for students and teachers because music education allows educators to teach social-emotional skills. Based on an analysis of the data and the relevant research literature, three themes emerged (see Table 1). Evidence-based decision-making requires evaluating each potential Action Option by the following criteria: time, resources, and effort. There is already limited time during the day for teachers to get what they want done, so it was essential to think of Action Options that take less time. Along with limited

² <http://my.ilstu.edu/~jkhahn/>

time, most schools have limited resources. So, making it as low effort as possible is vital to make potential actions more appealing to want to do. Based on the evaluation of each Action Option, an action will be recommended and justified.

Table 1

Evaluation of Action Options

	Time	Resources	Effort
Longer time in "Specials"	High	Low	High
Music Integrated Lesson Plans	Medium	Medium	Medium
Music/Band Club that Focuses on SEL	High	Medium	High

Longer time in "Specials"³

According to the interviewees, the limitations in improving music's impact on social-emotional learning were due to challenges such as large class sizes and limited time. Three of the four interviewees said there needed to be more time to spend on music and social-emotional learning because of their class sizes and time spent with each class. Dream Academy students have thirty minutes of music once a week. This means a class of fourteen students gets about thirty minutes to play music for the whole week. At Little Foot Elementary, it is similar; Chloe gets forty minutes with each class in the lower elementary grades. Longer time with students would give music teachers more opportunities to accomplish their goals. Athena said it best: "I should have more time with them. More time. Yeah, I would love that...Over time,

³ “‘specials teacher’ refers to teachers who teach one subject to multiple groups of children- usually every class in the school- a music teacher, or a PE teacher” (Caldwell, 2022)

you know, I developed a relationship with them, but there are almost 600 students and one of me...But if I have more time with them, I can get to them better" (personal communication, 2024). Edgar (2020) explained that all elements of SEL must be involved for social-emotional learning to work in the music classroom. Giving the music teachers more time to work on these skills would ensure they receive them entirely.

Giving more time to specials would take more time and effort to enact, but the resources would not change. Providing at least fifteen more minutes for students to do music, art, or PE would take time out of their daily schedule to work on their traditional academics. Allowing this would take more effort from their teachers and the administration. Resources should stay the same as the teachers already have the instruments they use in the classroom. The assumption is that students can build foundational SEL and musical skills, boost confidence, and feel a sense of accomplishment and success with more time. It is argued that with music education, students' skills in mathematics and linguistics, motivation, values, and creativity improve (Blasco-Magraner et al., 2021). Although time and effort would be a concern, resources would be minimal, and students would get more out of it.

Music Integrated Lesson Plans that are Culturally Sustaining and SEL-Based

Integrating music into lesson plans in a culturally sustaining and SEL-based manner could benefit the time capital, arts, and music have while still giving a focus on subjects like English and math. Educators can optimize the time spent on each discipline by creating an interdisciplinary approach that combines music with other subjects while nurturing students' social-emotional skills. Andreas pointed out that foundational reading and math skills have much focus and almost gatekeep the opportunity to balance these standards with music on top of

social-emotional learning. On the other hand, Chloe said, "What I keep saying is if we can get our schools on board, knowing that music isn't just a special. It's so much more, and it can be so much more. If they would just utilize the strength of music." She felt that if teachers utilize music in their classrooms, there could be room for growth in the students' music education and social-emotional skills. Similarly, Andreas and Athena acknowledged that many cultures have strong musical backgrounds. However, they often go unnoticed or undervalued in traditional school settings. Students from various cultural backgrounds can feel empowered, seen, and valued by incorporating diverse musical traditions and genres into lesson plans. Embracing cultural responsiveness in lesson plans, as emphasized by Hutton (2021), can help create inclusive environments where all students feel seen and valued, ultimately supporting their social-emotional growth. Students can succeed if we combine music with subjects such as math and are culturally responsive.

Using lesson plans that are integrated with music, culturally sustaining, and SEL-based would take educators' time, resources, and effort to plan and implement. Because of this, some educators may be resistant and want to stick to traditional teaching methods. Although this might be a problem, it is argued that the learning environment is more likely to be more engaging and dynamic. Studies emphasize this by showing that music and culturally responsive teaching boost students' confidence and improve their education (Blasco-Magraner et al., 2021; Hutton, 2021; Váradi, 2022). The assumption is that students will respond positively to these lesson plans, and teachers will embrace the importance of SEL and culturally responsive practices. By integrating culturally responsive and SEL-based music lesson plans, educators can create a supportive learning environment that values diversity and promotes empathy, ultimately contributing to students' overall development and well-being.

Music/Band Club that Focuses on SEL

Creating a Music/Band Club that nurtures students' social-emotional learning (SEL) through various music-related activities and experiences could benefit students who want more than just music class at Little Foot Elementary. Ensuring equitable learning opportunities for all students can be challenging, especially regarding music education, where vulnerability plays a significant role. Gaia (2024) explained that not all of her students love going to music all the time. She said that they have to be somewhat vulnerable no matter what. Andreas emphasized that by saying, "Not every student necessarily is as comfortable with the arts in general. And so, some students might not be able to access at the same kind of level" (personal communication, 2024). The club would provide a safe space for students to explore their musical interests while developing empathy, self-awareness, and responsible decision-making skills. It also gives the students more opportunities to listen to and play different types of music they might not get in the classroom. Andreas states that students in their school district need more access to ethnically diverse music, even genres ranging from punk rock to hip-hop. Adding these different genres could promote empathy. Exposure to diverse musical genres and traditions from various cultures through listening and playing will foster cross-cultural understanding and appreciation, ultimately encouraging students to acknowledge and value diverse backgrounds (Kūpana, 2015; Váradi, 2022).

The club would foster a supportive environment for students to engage in music and develop their SEL skills. It also encourages students to explore various genres, instruments, and ensemble experiences. It allows them to express themselves creatively and build confidence. The major downside would be that it would be resource-intensive and require more time and effort, making it challenging to implement. It also requires careful planning to balance SEL objectives

and music-related activities. The assumption is that students want to participate in this club and actively embrace the social-emotional components. Another assumption or hope would be that there would be support from school administrators, who would provide the resources and people to be available for club activities. By implementing this action option, Little Foot Elementary students can gain an inclusive space to grow musically and emotionally.

Conclusion

Recommendation. Based on the evidence, making music-integrated lesson plans that are culturally responsive and SEL-based is the best course of action. This action prioritizes being culturally responsive and using social-emotional learning throughout the day and lesson. It also helps Chloe's argument that music is not just a special and can be used for all subjects.

Concessions. Longer time in "specials" would benefit students to get what they want and need out of them. Athena pointed out that she would do more SEL-based activities, and students could play more. A club would give students more choice and opportunity to explore music and social-emotional skills.

Limitations. There is no way to know how other teachers and their students would react to the lesson plans. Depending on the lesson plan, resources, and effort could become a higher factor than anticipated. The assumption would be that teachers would work with the music teachers to ensure all learning outcomes are being taught and use their resources wisely.

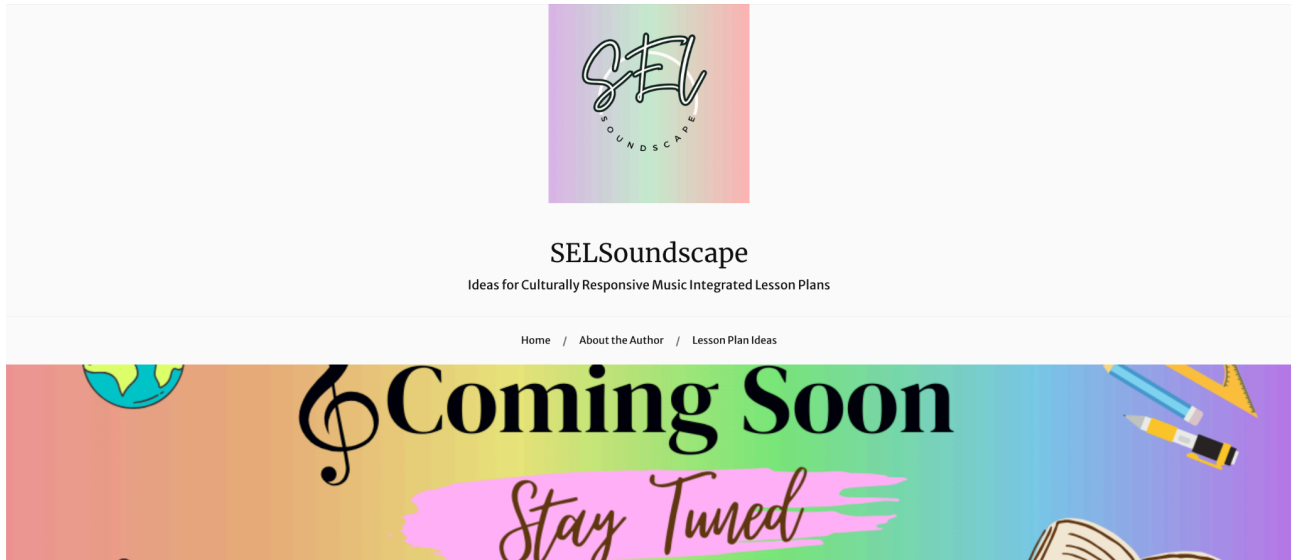
Potential negative outcomes. As with any lesson plan, only some classes will react to them similarly. We are also living in an unfortunate time where teaching subjects like SEL and

being culturally responsive are being persecuted. Some parents might have issues with what is being taught.

Conclusion. Despite the potential challenges and limitations on time, resources, and effort, making music-integrated lesson plans that are culturally responsive and SEL-based is the most substantial option. Music is more than just a special; it is a powerful tool that can enrich all aspects of a student's education by impacting social-emotional learning and culturally responsive teaching. Although there may be varied student reactions and potential resistance from some parents, the positive impact on student learning and well-being justifies implementing such lesson plans. It is essential to remain steadfast in promoting inclusive and enriching educational experiences for all students.

Action Documentation and Critical Reflection

This project focuses on improving music education's impact on social-emotional learning. The recommendation for enhancing music education's impact on social-emotional learning is to create culturally responsive and SEL-based music-integrated lesson plans. While reactions may vary, the positive effect on student learning and well-being justifies this approach, promoting inclusive and enriching educational experiences for all students. Instead of making lesson plans that might not get used, I created a website that will provide teachers with resources to be culturally responsive and integrate music into subjects like ELA, Math, Science, and History. They will be SEL-based as well. This reaches a larger audience, including parents, teachers, and administrators. It is easy to navigate and can be accessed on all devices, making it accessible to all.



<https://selsoundscape.wordpress.com/>

Action Research Project Documentation and Reflection

I created a website to provide teachers and parents with ideas and resources to blend social-emotional learning with music while making it culturally responsive. Leveraging my knowledge from a previous course, I organized lesson plan ideas into various categories, including ELA, Math, Health and Science, and History, with subcategories for kindergarten through sixth grade. During this process, I discovered a surprising need for more resources on music-integrated lesson plans on popular teacher websites like TeachersPayTeachers. This realization reinforced my commitment to sharing valuable materials and connecting them to California standards. As my project evolved, I needed to shift my focus from traditional lesson plans to emphasizing the materials and standards, streamlining the creation process.

The response to my website has been positive. An interviewee expressed enthusiasm for the concept and intends to share it with colleagues, while engagement on social media platforms indicates growing interest. Moving forward, I aim to expand the website's content, incorporating

resources for grades 7-12 and advocating for increased recognition of music education's impact on social-emotional learning.

This experience has taught me the importance of embracing change and adapting my perspective as I delve deeper into the subject. I have gained a greater understanding of the need for advocacy in this field and look forward to exploring the possibilities this endeavor holds for my future career.

Critical Reflection

Reflecting on this project, I have gained valuable insights about myself, teaching and learning, and working towards change. I discovered my ability to communicate my passions for music, learning, and social-emotional development. This realization has empowered me to contribute meaningfully to the conversation surrounding holistic education. My interactions with educators illuminated their unwavering dedication to their students' growth and well-being. Despite limited resources, their commitment to fostering holistic education, including arts and music, remained steadfast despite challenges. Recognizing these barriers, I have become more determined to advocate for integrating music education and culturally responsive practices in the classroom. This project revealed the scope of work ahead and instilled a sense of determination and possibility towards effecting positive change in education. By fostering a greater understanding of music's impact on student well-being and emphasizing the significance of culturally responsive teaching, I am hopeful that we can create a more inclusive and enriching learning environment for all students.

Synthesis and Integration

As a first-generation college student and one of the few in my immediate and extended family pursuing a teaching degree, I embarked on a pioneering journey driven by personal

motivation and a commitment to my educational and professional growth. I am immensely grateful for the skills I learned through Liberal Studies. My MLO 1 experience enabled me to build upon my pedagogies and challenge my critical thinking abilities, focusing on improving learning outcomes. Making lesson plans and taking courses that taught me more about how California schools operate has allowed me to develop a foundation to become the best educator I can be. Reflecting on my intersectionality and the significance of diversity in teaching, MLO 2 enhanced my understanding of the essential role that multiculturalism and inclusivity play in the classroom. Having courses that celebrate diversity and use educational practices that teach the importance of using multiculturalism in teaching gave me the spark for my action project. This project showed me the importance of diversity and multiculturalism in social-emotional learning and music education.

Because of MLO 3, I was able to make a website that will help me and other future Educators later down the road. It has also benefited me because now I know how to effectively make lesson plans through slideshows, and I can show my investigation and research skills through papers and social media. This semester, I focused on classes that concentrated on MLO 4. I got to have a community experience that taught me how to be socially responsible through being a social justice collaborator. Doing this Action Project taught me how important it is to be an advocate not just for students but also for teachers. Many of the classes, especially this research project, showed me why advocating for equity and access for all is so important.

This course helped a lot with MLO 5. I got to gain knowledge on how to really dive into a subject area that I care for. Being able to complete a coherent study was something I never thought was imaginable for me to do. Being able to complete MLO 5 really shows how much the Liberal Studies program has helped me develop professionally. To keep enhancing my skills and

become the professional I envision myself being, I need to reflect more on all the skills I worked so hard to master and put them to great use. I hope that when I teach, my students will know that I am always advocating for them, that it is okay to fail, and that they can learn empathy and learn from it.

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