

## **Get on Track with Music**

*Samuella Barnum*  
Yates High School

### **CURRICULUM UNIT DESCRIPTION**

This unit aims to introduce and enlighten students on using and listening to music to enhance the learning experience in the classroom. More specifically, my aim is to introduce and inform students about different types of music and how they can use them as learning tools in the educational process.

### **INTRODUCTION**

In the world of education, every year brings excitement, challenges, and students with special needs to whom we must attend in our schools and classrooms. Each passing year leaves me with awe and wonder of what is to come. It challenges me on what to do and what is effective in dealing with our young people.

As an educator, I am in constant contact with teenagers who are not in tune with their bodies. They have a multitude of problems. Their well-being is not good. Well-being is defined as the state of being happy, healthy and prosperous. Many students are depressed, and have low self-esteem, problems sleeping at night, bad eating habits, and obesity problems. The list goes on and on. Along with these problems, the stressful high school experience complicates the development of a teenager. Some students find that their bodies are developing faster than ever. Hormones and testosterone levels are at an all-time high. Girls try to fit in and most want to be popular. They try to imitate the older and more popular girls. Some try too hard to be different. They struggle with books and peer pressure. Boys look at the older and more popular boys. They spend a lot of time trying to emulate and imitate them. They struggle with image and girls.

The student population that I teach is a very interesting one. I teach inner-city youth ages 12-18. The population consists of African American, Hispanic, Asian and White students. The school is a very interesting high school that is an historical icon. The school is 78 years old and it is in the heart of a community that has seen many changes through the years. It is, also surrounded by numerous churches and community organizations. The income in the neighborhood ranges from upper middle class to low poverty. The area contains homes that have been owned by families and have been passed from generation to generation. Then, during the 1960s, the homes were infiltrated with apartments and low-income housing.

The community consists of prime real estate and is experiencing what use to be known as “urban renewal.” In other words, people are seeking refuge and moving back to the inner city after getting tired of driving back and forth to communities further away from the city. The physical building sits between two legendary universities, and it would seem that this would influence our student body. These factors make this inner-city high school a very interesting place to be.

The student population is a multi-cultural population that presents very interesting challenges to all teachers. There is a large population of students with special needs within this same student body that requires special attention from all of our teachers. Therefore, all teachers must be very diverse in their teaching strategies to successfully educate our students. We must establish what

the bottom line is when teaching in a “global community” such as ours. According to Walter R. Jacobs, Jr. in “Seven Tips for Improving Instructional Skills: Reminders for Teachers” states “Teachers’ content knowledge and instructional skills play a critical role in improving students’ academic achievement” (Jacobs, Introduction). Jacobs’ seven tips for improving instructional skills include the following: help students overcome fear of failure, encourage classroom excellence, stimulate students to ask questions, stress that teachers create their own curriculums, review standards and customize them to fit what your students need to know, respect your students’ opinions, and encourage reading. In this project, I have chosen to incorporate music with most material that is presented in the classroom. It has been my experience that students need to become competent in a global community. Students need to be exposed to and become educated in techniques to help them gather necessary information about himself or herself about their surroundings. This information can cause students to become more aware about the environment that they are in and help them make appropriate decisions based on that information. After exposing students to this kind of important information, we must then decide how to present information and prepare curriculum that will not only appeal to our students but will teach the pertinent information that we must leave with each student. We must refine curriculum in our classrooms that actually work and that are effective.

Music is a tool that can be a calming solace for children of all ages. I have been involved in music all my life. Even though I decided to major in Business Education and Marketing when I went to college, music in education is a key part of my professional thinking. When I was eight years old, my mother and father decided to let me take piano lessons. After months of lessons, I complained about my music teacher tapping my fingers at piano lessons, and I wanted to quit. My mother made me continue the lessons. Little did I know that she was opening a whole new world for me. In elementary school we took music classes, music appreciation and sight reading. Choir and Glee club were activities I could not get enough of. Today, I can still see Ms. Owens teaching us to sight-read the beautiful notes that were placed in front of us. She taught us how to read music. I can remember how excited we all were when we received our speaking parts and our solos for the annual “Operetta,” a musical play that was held at the local high school. Our fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers and other family members would not think of missing this big event. They all got a chance to help out with the stage and the costumes. Now that I think of it, it was a time to get the whole village involved. They loved it. Ms. Sarah Mae Woodard would always make my costumes, and she could really sew. My mother and I would make several trips to her house to make sure that my costumes were just right. She would take so much pride in her work. She was also an alto in the church choir.

My experiences as a student in middle school and high school were even richer. Music classes were a part of the curriculum. We had band, choir, art, and theater arts. I loved the music classes, but it was also the time that I discovered my talent to type very well. I remember so vividly taking an art class and learning how to make papier-mâché objects. I thought that the art teacher was the best thing since sliced bread. I would run to art class back in the day. In high school we had choir, orchestra, and stage band. I began singing with the choir because that was my background. I was so good at typing that I no longer had to take typing. I placed out of all of the typing classes. My first jobs were all typing jobs and I loved them. In my sophomore year of high school, I then got bold and auditioned for stage band. I was selected by world-renowned bandleader and music educator, Conrad Johnson. I was never the same. My high school experience was the best that a girl could have. I got a chance to travel the world and meet different kinds of students with this national award-winning music organization. We found ourselves on different college campuses and in various parts of the country every week. However, we knew that in order to stay in the band, we had to keep our grades up. Most of us were on the honor roll. Music lived in us and many students went on to become professional

musicians. Most of us were too busy to get in trouble. Our minds were at ease and our beings were well because we had our music.

Music is a tool that can be used effectively in practically any classroom. I teach keyboarding at the high school level. This task is not just a matter of teaching students how to type on a keyboard. My desire is to help my students increase their knowledge of living a stress-free life, working under pressure and being successful in life to ensure their well being in life. In my keyboarding class, it is very important for my students to learn to focus and relax so that they can learn to type accurately and with a consistent speed. Also, when my students leave the classroom and enter the work environment, they must be able to focus and stay on task as well as live a healthy lifestyle. Music will be a major component of my unit and my students will have first hand experience on discovering the effect that different types of music will have on their own individual focus and typing skills.

Numerous studies have been done on the effectiveness of music on education and learning. The results are astounding. The following information from the article “Music in the Classroom” from [About.com](http://About.com) is information that will help in any classroom:

The use of music in the classroom can make the entire learning process more enjoyable and can stimulate the “right” brain learning. Six years ago researchers reported that people scored better on a standard IQ test after listening to Mozart. Other tests soon followed: Rats raised on Mozart run through mazes faster and more accurately. People with Alzheimer’s disease function more normally if they listen to Mozart and the music even reduces the severity of epileptic seizures.

Using music to introduce an exercise is a great way to activate vocabulary and get students thinking in the right direction. Take a piece of music or song that you associate with a certain activity or place (“New York, New York” sung by Frank Sinatra) and play the first thirty seconds of the piece. You will be surprised at how quickly associations come to students’ minds – many more than if you introduced the lesson by saying, “Today we are going to talk about New York City.”

Here are some suggestions for appropriate music for different activities:

- Grammar – Mozart, Haydn, Bach, Handel, Vivaldi
- Imagination exercises (descriptive writing, speaking) –Ravel, Debussy, Satie
- Current Situation, News in the World – Rap (for inner cities and their problems), Ethnic Music from the discussed countries (you would be surprised at how many people quickly associate the type of music with a part of the world)
- Making Future Plans – Fun upbeat jazz (“Take Five” by Dave Brubeck)
- Discussing “Serious” issues – the “serious” Germans: Beethoven, Brahms. (“Music in the Classroom”)

I encourage and agree with authors such as Eric Jensen when he states, “There are many, many ways the musical arts can be implemented in classrooms. Music can be either played or listened to actively or passively.” This concept will be very beneficial to teachers because it will help you with all students and most importantly with those who create difficult challenges. Music can reach students that sometimes we feel cannot be reached. However, let your students know why you use what you use. It is the teacher’s responsibility to inform them the differences in music. Some music will calm you down. Some music will energize and some will inspire. Students of all ages can benefit. However, the classroom teacher should always have the last word in music selections. We should listen and get input from our students, but we must evaluate what lyrics are hurtful or create an inappropriate mood. Don’t be afraid to say no. It’s our professional duty. Students will love to get involved in the process of managing the music after

you have explained and introduced it. The classroom teacher will have more than enough disk jockeys. Classroom management will play a very important role in the success of this project. The teacher should have a classroom CD player and a space to secure class music.

According to Jensen, studies suggest that students learn and recall better when physiological states are matched. If students learn material with a particular music in the background, they'll also do better with it during the test. This suggests that you might want to use music for learning only when you can match it at test time:

Approximately 15-25% of your students may be highly sensitive to sounds. They may be highly auditory learners. If these students complain about your use of music, you might want to turn it down a bit, listen to their suggestions and remind them you use music only part of the time, not all the time. At least a quarter of your students dislike teamwork; would you throw that out, too? Be respectful, but stand your ground. Background music does affect your students.

The consensus is:

- 1) select it carefully
- 2) make sure it's predictably repetitive and
- 3) play music in a major key
- 4) use instrumentals, not vocals for the background.

Some students will complain about music because of another issue: control. If the room's too cold, and students can access the thermostat, they complain less. If music is not their taste, and they can have input on what's played or the volume, you'll get fewer complaints. When a student complains, you can be empathetic; either turn down the music a bit or allow the student to sit further from the speakers. Remember the power of authority figures and the value of your credibility with music. If you act positive when using music, and show that you believe it actually will enhance learning and memory, it will have a stronger effect. The group that was told music inhibits learning did perform worse on a music-enhanced word list and vocabulary quiz than the controls. Silence is golden. Anything can become saturated. Use music selectively and purposely. In most classes, it might be used from 10-30% of the total learning time.

Two exceptions:

- 1) if music is the whole focus of a class, more may be fine.
- 2) you may use environmental noise/music like waterfalls, rain forests or oceans for longer than other selections. (Jensen)

Based on the evidence gathered so far, it's both reasonable and prudent that music should be a significant part of every child's education. It is the ethical, scientific and cultural imperative that all children get exposure to music as an equal with every other discipline (Jensen). Research has shown that this knowledge of music can be used in every classroom and with every age group.

There are numerous organizations such as M.U.S.I.C. Music is a non-profit 501(c) (3) organization that is publicly supported. They promote the educational use of songs by teachers in all subject areas. They believe that music and songs are a great expression of the human experience. They believe that song lyrics are excellent teaching tools and will excite the young students that we are teaching on a daily basis. They believe that music can motivate students in the classroom. This organization believes that the creative process of analyzing and interpreting song lyrics can help students to develop critical thinking, writing, essential research and media literacy skills. "Song-based lessons, projects, and activities are tools that will enable educators to

create opportunities for all students to experience success in the classroom. Concurrently, student self-image and self-esteem will increase as they begin to view themselves as competent and capable learners. This organization believes that all students can learn, but first you must get their attention” (Chase).

Breathing techniques with music are another interesting concept that can be very useful for classroom teachers. Many of us know the benefits of controlled breathing. Some of us were trained in Lamaze classes before childbirth. It is a fact that controlled, conscious breathing has the benefit of relaxing your mind, your muscles and reduces stress. Many believe that proper breathing can cure some physical ailments in the body. Many believe that proper flow of breath through the body can cure some ailments and disease. There are breathing techniques that we can combine with music that can help us to slow down and improve our focus. As classroom teachers we can demonstrate taking deep breaths to relax. Show students how to breathe deeply through the nose and mouth and exhale. In my keyboarding class, being aware of your fingers and how they work is very important. My students are taught to use muscles ranging from the neck, through the arm and the fingers. Students are taught that they must de-stress and focus to be a good typist. The goal is to type accurately and fast. It is very important to teach students to recognize when they are nervous, stressed and angry. They can be taught to become aware of certain body parts feeling tight. If they can learn to recognize these changes in the body, then they can learn to have power over their bodies and learn how to manage it. They can learn to breathe deeply and listen to soothing music to help their well-being. Students can learn that when the body is at its best, they can be receptive to learning and be better able to think.

Yoga with Music in the classroom is another valuable tool to use.

“Various yoga postures and slow movement games and exercises are fun and helpful for teaching children to relax, use controlled movements, and increase their creative imagination and imagery skills” (Rief 2). Music with yoga is an invaluable tool:

- Music can be very helpful for relaxation, as a previsualization activity, to soothe away worries and distractions, and bring a sense of inner peace.
- Music also stimulates the brain in other ways besides relaxation. Many people find that they are better able to focus – and are more productive and motivated—when listening to the radio or some of their favorite music.
- Many teachers find that playing cassettes/CDs or classical music, soothing environmental sounds, and instrumental arrangements is very effective in the classroom. Different forms of music have been found to be effective in increasing the ability to focus and concentrate; calm, soothe, and relax; and enhance learning, creativity, and critical-thinking skills.
- Research has found that instrumental musical arrangements at 60 beats per minute has therapeutic effects. Some of the music is recommended for use when teaching handwriting, and to play during math testing, science labs, computer labs, homework time, silent reading, and so forth.
- Musical therapy is being used in different settings, and research supports that listening to various rhythmic patterns has calming and focusing effects. (Rief 3)

We all know how greatly music affects our feelings and energy levels. Without even thinking about it, we use music to create desired moods—to make us happy, to enjoy movement and dance, to energize, to bring back powerful memories, to help us relax and focus. Music is a powerful tool for our personal expression without daily lives—it helps “set the scene” for many important experiences:

Throughout time, people have recognized and intentionally use the powerful effects of sound. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the western scientific community has conducted research to

validate and expand our analytical knowledge of music. This research supports what we know from personal experience: Music greatly affects and enhances our learning and living! Research continues to be conducted to provide helpful guidelines for our intentional use of music, especially in the classroom. (Brewer)

My purpose for creating this unit is to help students become aware of how important their well-being is and the relationship that music has on their lives. Well-being is not being addressed enough in school. Our students are stressed out and music can help get some of our students back on track. This curriculum unit will allow my students to examine the state of their own well being while they listen to music and type about their feelings on a daily basis. One of the outcomes will be that my students will be able to examine some of their innermost feelings about themselves.

In an effort to help my students examine their lives and well-being, it is also my intent to help them gather tools that will help them excel in their other classes. It has been my observation that the fear of academic failure is very strong among my students. According to Walter R. Jacobs, Jr., in “Seven Tips for Improving Instructional Skills: Reminders for Teachers”:

- Constantly remind students that they have the ability to do their assignments. Stress that you support them, that you expect them to work hard to succeed and that failure is not an option.
- Include “real-world” connections when you demonstrate concepts and principles. Indicate how the subject matter is meaningful to them now.
- Emphasize that good jobs in the future will demand mastery of the knowledge and academic skills you are teaching them now.
- Help your students to believe that, as many prominent leaders have said “the only thing we have to fear is fear itself.” (Jacobs 3)

Music in the classroom will help in accomplishing these goals. Music can be played when the students enter the classroom on a daily basis. I intend to select and play music while the students are entering the classroom to help them create a more pleasant atmosphere. A second selection will queue the students that it is time to begin the daily objectives. The students will be introduced to a concept that I learned as a child from my parents called Mandala, which means to have possession of one’s essence. To begin the mandala, it is often helpful to have soft meditative music in the background. We will explore what types of music that the students are listening to by keeping a journal for five days. We will research topics such as breathing, Yoga, and eating habits, and we will explore what kind of music is used with each concept. We will explore what kind of music each student prefers when writing poetry about themselves and will explore different types of music that the students prefer when they are painting and creating a class project.

## **OBJECTIVES**

1. To introduce music as an instructional tool in the classroom.
2. To have students to listen to a variety of music and become aware of how it affects the way that it makes them feel.
3. To have students describe their feelings and emotions.
4. To help students research techniques that help them maintain well-being throughout life.
5. To have students express their innermost feelings in the form of music and poetry.
6. To seek input from family members on how to make oneself happy.

## **INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES**

The Instruction Strategies are the main ingredient for success in this curriculum. The Instructor should consistently play music. Plan and tailor your music for daily lessons. Have

music playing when the students sign in for class every day. This will establish a routine. Students will look forward to the adventure in **your** classroom. This will help you with the discipline and classroom management in your room. The classroom teacher will improve the atmosphere of the classroom because he/she will study the personalities of individual students and then tailor the needs of the entire class periods. This will help you choose your classroom strategies more carefully because you are considering the data for each class. We are all very aware that each class has its own personality. Therefore, a song such as Mariah Carey's "Hero" might work for some classes and might not work for others. We should also consider elements such as tempo. Upbeat tempo songs may work better in the afternoon classes after lunch. Message music might work in the morning or afternoon. This unit will benefit the classroom teacher and each student.

This in turn will help improve the entire academic climate thus improving testing environments and test scores. This is where we are ultimately trying to go.

This unit will be used over a six week period. Each section of the unit is designed for two 30-minute periods per week.

The unit is comprised of six components:

- I. Student Profile
- II. Interview a Family Member on "Ways to Make Yourself Happy and What Kind of Music do they listen to?"
- III. Five Day Music Journal
- IV. Research Topics
  1. Breathing Techniques with Music
  2. Yoga with Music
  3. What Effect Does Music Have on What You Eat?
- V. Write a Poem on "How I Feel When I am Happy"
- VI. Create a Well-Being Collage

My students will research, write, type and present their findings. They will have the opportunity to conduct research on the Internet, in our school library and in the Houston Public Library. They will have goals, and they must meet deadlines to achieve those goals. Most importantly, the students will learn to identify some of their feelings and how some of their peers are feeling and what role music can play. Students will learn in six weeks what some of us never learn in a whole lifetime. Learning is like that. Just imagine a classroom where teachers are teaching, sharing and modeling with students on a consistent basis. The outcomes will be phenomenal.

## **LESSON PLANS**

### **Lesson 1**

**Title:** Your Personal Student Profile

**Objective:** The objective is to find out some background information on each individual student. The Instructor will tailor the profile around each individual class section.

**Materials:** Pens, Paper, Dictionaries

**Activities:** The students will view the "Student Profile" and will have to complete the profile in one session and proofread, edit and type the final profile in the second session.

**Evaluation:** Questions must be answered in complete sentences, must be grammatically correct and must be complete.

The instructor may use various sources to create a student profile. It should be tailored to fit the individual personalities of each class section. Be creative and include questions about personal tastes of music so that the classroom teacher can be selective and innovative in the choices of music for each class.

## **Lesson 2**

**Title:** Ways to Make Yourself Happy

**Objective:** The objective is to interview a happy family member on ways to make yourself happy and what kinds of music make them happy.

**Materials:** Students, Family Members

**Activities:** Students will make an appointment to interview a family member and the questions will be evaluated and edited by the student and the Instructor.

**Evaluation:** Students will type their results and present them in class.

Encourage students to interview family members that they admire and have possibly spent time around. They should be prepared to be professional when they interview. Review the interviewing process. Encourage them to view their favorite television anchor person. The students should type, review and edit their questions. The questions should be grammatically correct. Make it a very big project!

## **Lesson 3**

**Title:** Five Day Music Journal

**Objective:** The objective is to write down the different types of music that each student listens to. The students will have specific guidelines to follow on music content, such as no profanity, etc.

**Materials:** CD player and headphones

**Activities:** The student will be assigned to a CD player and a headset and students will listen to music for five minutes in class. The student will express and rate the music in a journal that will be designed by the student.

**Evaluation:** Instructor will generate a form that will allow students to rate each selection.

Each student should be encouraged to listen to a variety of music. This is going to be a difficult task. However, rules and guidelines must be enforced. The teacher is in charge of the project. Suggest that they visit websites and that they listen to alternate radio stations while riding in their vehicles. This is an exercise in which the students should “listen out of the box”!

## **Lesson 4**

**Title:** Research Topics

**Objective:** Students will research three (3) topics:

- 1) Breathing Techniques with Music
- 2) Yoga with Music
- 3) What Effect Does Music Have On What You Eat?

**Materials:** Public Library, School Library, Internet

**Activities:** Students are required to research all three topics and present them to the class in a PowerPoint presentation.

**Evaluation:** Students will be rated on their presentations.



This is the research portion of the project. Students may need additional time for this portion. The classroom teacher should adjust accordingly. Students may need prior knowledge of using the computer and software programs.

### **Lesson 5**

**Title:** How I Feel When I am Happy

**Objective:** The students will express themselves through poetry writing.

**Materials:** Word Processor, Typewriter, Personal Computers

**Activities:** Students will be introduced to poetry composition and writing by researching it on the Internet and then they will compose their own poem with music.

**Evaluation:** Poems will be recited in class and will be displayed in the classroom.

Vocabulary, spelling, grammar and writing can be used in this segment. Public speaking should be addressed also. The classroom teacher should adjust accordingly.

### **Lesson 6**

**Title:** "Well-being" Collage

**Objective:** Students will display what the term "well-being" means to them by creating a collage.

**Materials:** Magazines, Journals

**Activities:** Students will collect pictures, words, phrases, captions, etc. to create a collage that exudes well-being.

**Evaluation:** Student must complete their individual collage and it must be prepared to be displayed in the classroom.

Students will be encouraged to be very creative. The classroom teacher will be required to set rules, regulations and guidelines.

### **CONCLUSION**

This unit was designed specifically to allow students to meaningfully incorporate music in the classroom. This unit also assists students in becoming aware of the concept of well-being which is so important in our present society. This unit will be very beneficial to the students, for they will also learn to incorporate word processing programs, power point, and type on a keyboard.

Using music in the classroom is soooooooooo cool  
It relaxes your mind and helps your students follow the rules

When you saturate the atmosphere with music in class  
They suddenly can get their work done really fast!

Well-being is the state of being happy and healthy  
And it is not only for the wealthy

Music has a way of soothing the soul  
Music has its' own way of gaining control

Have you had your dose of music today?  
Try it and let it wash all your troubles away!

~ Samuella Barnum

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