

16

CHAPTER

MUSIC IN CURRICULAR INTEGRATION

You might pause at reading “curricular integration” and wonder what it means. If you’ve taken education courses, you’re probably familiar with an “integrated curriculum” as well as “interdisciplinary studies” and “multidisciplinary studies.” All of these approaches combine two or more subjects found in an elementary curriculum. Typically the integration focuses on a unit theme or topic and frequently involves student projects. Sometimes the unit concludes with a culminating event. Yes, there are differences between the approaches but all are variations of curricular integration.

With the implementation of ESSA, curricular integration that includes arts is likely to increase; the arts, including music, will play a significant role in students’ understanding of the study topic. If students are to be successful in the artistic aspects of the study or project, they must have some conceptual and skill development. That is, curricular integration does not mean that concept and skill development are omitted. In music, the previously described sequential process of conceptual and skill development still is necessary. The development could be included in the curricular integration or the performances involved might provide an opportunity for students to apply what they have learned.

In this chapter, your **focus** will be on:

- Types of music and music-related materials appropriate for inclusion in an integrated unit of study or project;
- Sources of materials;
- Considerations for choosing materials;
- Factors to deliberate when combining each material with a concept focus demonstrated through a skill/activity;
- Steps for writing a topic-related chant and/or speech ensemble.

In order to learn, you will:

- Identify the types of music and music-related materials that can be included in integrated units of study and celebratory events;
- Explore resources you can use to find materials;
- Identify factors to consider when choosing materials;
- Explore a variety of combinations of material, concept focus and skill/activity;
- Write a chant and/or speech ensemble related to a specific topic by following the steps provided.

Certainly, common sense would indicate that some themes or topics are more suited to integration, particularly arts integration, than others. For instance, the topic of double-digit addition is less suited to arts integration than the study of an historical period, a geographical area or a specific culture. Regardless of time or place, the experiences and emotions central to human life have been reflected in music. Even the routine aspects of people’s lives are revealed through their songs and instrumental creations. People cannot be separated from their music and music cannot be separated from the people who create(d) it and perform(ed) it. Therefore, if a study topic or project focuses on a specific

culture or historical period, the arts of the people should be integral. The students should be exposed to and involved in the music that conveys the feelings and experiences of the people.

Even if the study focus is not cultural, but perhaps in a science area, such as weather, an aspect of transportation or a category of animals, these topics are so central to human experiences that people have created songs about them and music to depict them. For instance, people have written music about animals, plants and bodies of water. Similarly, for traditional holidays and special events, people create music and dances of celebration. So, regardless of the curricular focus, you can give the children in your class the opportunity to experience the arts, including music, as an aspect of their study. Also, the types of music materials and experiences presented in this chapter are applicable for including music in a celebration of a special occasion such as Thanksgiving or the coming of spring. At the completion of this chapter, you'll be ready to provide your students with interesting, educational curricular-integration experiences that include music.

SONGS

The songs the children perform will be the major portion of the music contribution to the integrated-subjects unit of study. The children not only will sing the songs, but probably will add an instrumental accompaniment to at least one them and perhaps will perform movement, maybe a dance, with another. In most cases, three songs will be appropriate, although more or less could be included depending on the amount of time devoted to the project, interest and ability of students and availability of appropriate songs. The students' enjoyment and success will be rooted in the songs you select.

If the topic focus is a culture, authenticity is the most important factor to consider when selecting songs. The songs should come from the culture whether the topic is historical or present day. For instance, you should choose real cowboy songs, not songs about cowboys, or select real Native American songs, not songs about Indians. Select songs that convey different feelings. The songs should represent the varied feelings of people and/or be representative of different aspects of the culture. In order to do that, the songs will have to be at different tempos and have different dynamic levels. The songs should provide variety.

Your students should be able to sing the selected songs comfortably and well. So, consider song characteristics such as the vocal range, rhythmic complexity, length and amount of repetition. You might want to refer to "Selecting Student-Appropriate Songs" in Chapter 10 and/or to "Appendix" examples of songs for children of different ages. If the lyrics are crammed with fast-moving words, the song might be useful for teaching the children about the topic, but would only frustrate children attempting to sing it. As you know, not all songs for kids are suitable for them to sing, although they may enjoy hearing them. For the project, however, the children should be able to sing each song completely. You'll know your students and what will work for them.

You'll probably need to explore several sources to find songs. Basal series books are a good place to start because the songs most likely will be appropriate for the children in the grade you are teaching. Look for a topical index to find the names of songs that will be useful in teaching a particular subject.

Another resource is the internet. For songs from various cultures, search for "the name of the continent, region or country + songs for kids + the name of your video service," like this: "Asian songs for kids," "West African songs for kids," "Native American songs for kids." For other curricular topics, search for some combination of the "topic + songs + either elementary kids or teaching + the name of your video service." Here are some examples: "science songs for elementary kids," "science songs for teaching" or "songs for teaching science." If you look at the related topics list, you probably will see some specifics such as "weather songs for teaching" or "songs about the human body." Use the same search process for math, geography or social studies. An internet search for authentic songs from American history can be problematic. Contemporary composed songs about American history are plentiful and perhaps you'll want to use them in some way, but authentic historical songs that children can sing are difficult to find online. Fortunately, that is not your only source. Besides basal series, check with the librarian and/or a music teacher.



Begin the song selection process by finding five or more topic-related songs that your students will be able to perform well. Look at the texts with your students' interests in mind to be sure that all are useable possibilities. Include

only songs that your students will really, really enjoy performing. Perhaps you already have compiled a resource file in which case the materials will be readily available to you. If not, this is a good time to begin. You'll want to include variety among the songs. Some should be fast, some slow. Some should be loud, some quiet. They should express different feelings. Also, variety brings interest to the performances. So as you gather songs, listen to each one with attention to the tempo and dynamic level and the general feelings conveyed. Make notes. Your notes will be valuable as you make final decisions. Essentially, you will be compiling a resource file of appropriate songs from which to select the best ones to meet other criteria.

If students are to perform instrumental accompaniments and dances, they will need to have developed at least a few concepts and skills. This is not the ideal time to introduce new concepts. Rather, this is a good time for the students to use what they know. However, if necessary, you might have to use the experiences to help the students develop concepts and skills they will need for their performances. A rule of thumb: Keep it simple. Be sure not to overwhelm the children to the point that they become confused. They'll enjoy the experience if they're successful, but not if they're struggling.

Under broad headings from the Sample Conceptual Curriculum, list the specific concepts they've developed. If you have not taught music to them, ask the music teacher what concepts your students developed in their music classes. Then, identify the songs that are clearly exemplary of the developed concepts. For the songs you find in basal series, look at the information for teachers to note the conceptual focus and compare it to the list of concepts your students have developed. Again, add it to your file. For all songs, regardless of source, listen and notice what components you hear immediately, always with reference to the developed concepts.

- Do you hear an aspect of rhythm: generally fast or slow? the beat? a repeated melodic rhythm? the metric accent and meter?
- Does your ear catch the melody: a high/low or low/high leap? an ascending or descending melodic line? a flowing contour?
- Do you hear the general dynamic level or a change in dynamics? sudden or gradual?
- In form, do you hear: clear phrases? two or three sections?

Most likely, rhythmic examples will be most easily identified, but also be aware of examples of pitch, dynamics and form. Perhaps the songs you gather will contain examples from some but not all concept categories. That's fine. However, be sure that several concept categories are included, not just one or two. Remember that you're working towards variety. Indicate the concept(s) with the song(s) so that you won't forget. Before making further song-choice decisions, turn to the listening example.

LISTENING EXAMPLES

At least one listening example should be included, but more will be fine. The listening example should be a vocal/choral performance of a song that the students cannot sing or an instrumental composition related to the topic. If the topic is a specific culture, the students should hear an authentic performance. It could be vocal or instrumental or combined.

The basal series usually include authentic performances on accompanying CDs. Check out the index to find suitable examples. Listening examples for multicultural topics are easy to find online. A video will provide both aural and visual learning about the culture. Much like you did for tone color examples in "The Bare Necessities," search by "name of continent, region or country + traditional music + name of your video server," like these examples: "African traditional music," "Balkan traditional music," "traditional music of Scotland." Remember to check the related searches. Even if the topic is a bit historic, an internet search could reveal an old recording of an actual performance or a performance by those who learned the songs from their elders through oral tradition.



The world of classical music is filled with program music based on topics your students might study. As was explained in the "Listening" section of Chapter 13, program music depicts a non-musical idea. That is, it tells a

story or musically describes a place, person or event. So, when searching for a listening example, use the words “classical music about + the study topic,” such as “weather,” “nature,” “astronomy,” “animals” or “geography.” Be as specific as possible. For instance, a search for “classical music about trains” and/or “classical music about boats” will provide better results than “classical music about transportation.” The search might lead to the music itself, but more likely to the names of pieces that you can find with a follow-up search.



There are wonderful compositions about American heritage that include folk songs. Many pieces of program music have been written that would be appropriate for cross-curricular projects. There are program pieces about historical figures like Abraham Lincoln, geographical areas like Appalachia and famous sites like the Grand Canyon. Some of these pieces will be in basal series, so check the index. They can be found online if you know the title of the piece. So ask a music teacher for the name of a piece to correlate with the topic and then find it online.

Listen to the piece(s) you find with attention to student appeal and conceptual possibilities. You’ll have to focus your attention on rhythm, tone color, dynamics, pitch and form. Which do you notice easily? Compare what you hear to the concepts that the students have developed and find at least one match. As always, make notes. Also, you might find a listening guide or map for the piece. Search online.

You now should have the names of about five student-appealing songs with notes regarding the general mood and potential for conceptual focus. You should have the name of at least one listening example that your students will enjoy with notes about conceptual potential. Put those aside for a bit and turn to poems and stories, another category in which music activities can be incorporated.

POEMS AND/OR STORIES

Poems and/or stories most likely will be included as a language arts component in an integrated approach. In any case, be sure to include at least one. As with songs and listening examples, if a cultural or historical topic is being studied, authenticity is the primary factor for selection. However, sometimes historical ones use language difficult for children to understand. In that case, you could use just a short portion or a more modern poem related to the topic. Some authentic poems and/or folktales might be in the language arts book you use.

You might be able to find some in music basal series, but that would not be a primary source. Librarians are wonderful resources and most are eager to help. Just ask. You can find poems from various cultures online. Search by “name of continent, geographical area, country or ethnicity + poem.” Adding “for kids” will limit the search: “African American poems for kids.” You can find stories in the same way by inserting “story” or “folktale,” as in “South American folktales.”



Poems and stories about many study subjects often appear in children’s literature. Of course, you could search online. Search for “poem or story + name of the topic,” such as “poems about transportation,” or “stories about westward expansion.” If the materials you find seem too advanced, add the words “for kids.” “American history poems for kids” is an example.

A music perspective can enliven the experience beyond reading or listening. Ideas for adding and/or imitating sounds, creating tone poems and sound stories and for performing descriptive movement were presented in the “Exploring/Creating” section of Chapter 13. A review of that information might be helpful as you select materials for the project.

Choose at least one poem and/or story/folktale that you know will appeal to children. If you have more, that’s good. Choices provide options when the time comes for final decisions. Think about potential for conceptual focus and music activity. Make notes. When you’ve done that, you’re finished with the preliminary stage regarding poems and/or stories.

MAKING FINAL CHOICES

For the integrated-curriculum unit of study, you now should have (1) about five songs, (2) at least one listening example and (3) at least one poem or story, all of which you know will appeal to children and all with notes regarding