

Traditional Singing Curriculum in a Multiethnic Neighborhood Elementary School.

The ONE Sings program supports the use of singing in the curriculum of the Integrated Arts Academy in Burlington, Vermont. The ONE Sings program, (currently in pilot form), assembles and teaches a repertoire of traditional songs relevant to the teaching curriculum and to the population served by the school. The goals of the program are to support the intellectual and social development of the students, to provide support and guidance to teachers and staff, to prepare students for future engagement with musical activities, to foster an appreciation for traditional singing and to support the communities of Burlington with their rich musical traditions.

Repertoire development.

The core repertoire was collected by Brian Perkins and intended to be broadly representative of traditional American youth singing repertoire appropriate to K-2 students.

The repertoire was filtered to exclude objectionable material such as overtly sexist or racist material.

Multicultural sources were prioritized.

Local repertoire was prioritized.

Repertoire was researched so that cultural and historical context could be understood and communicated to the students and to the teaching staff.

Repertoire was favored which enhanced the classroom curriculum. Counting songs, color songs and other repertoire was emphasized.

Teaching workshops were developed

Historically Significant Repertoire Associated with the Old North End.

Repertoire is being collected and presented representing the historical communities served by the IAA/Wheeler School. Historically significant repertoire includes Eastern European Jewish repertoire associated with the immigrant wave of 1880-1930. French repertoire associated with the Franco-American (Quebeçois) immigration of 1830-19???. And English-language repertoire from English, Scottish and Irish immigration from the colonial era through 1900. Also noteworthy are Italian American immigrants (1880-1920?) German-American immigrants (1850??-1880) and Syrian/Lebanese immigrants all of whom were a distinct parts of Burlington's Old North End community.

Less accessible but essential to this project is the repertoire and musical traditions associated with Burlington's Abénaki population.

Newly Collected Repertoire From Tradition Bearers

Repertoire is currently being collected and presented which is drawn from the immigrant communities now present in the Old North End. Changes in immigration laws, local programs and conditions and world events have caused a large influx of immigrants into Burlington over the past 30 years. These groups are of particular interest because of the cultural traditions which they bring to Burlington. The ONE Sings program seeks to affirm the value of traditional singing repertoire and help to use musical expression as a way of supporting children and families.

New American Populations with a significant presence in the O.N.E.

Somali Bantu,

Nepali,
Burmese,
Sudanese,
Burundi,
Vietnamese

These populations are significant in the Burlington area but not necessarily in the ONE.

Tibetan,
Bosnian
Mexican/Central American

These cultures are represented in the student body by a small number of students.

Dominican,
Guinean
Estonian
Iraqi
Korean

Traditions Brought to the Old North End from other parts of the US.

A significant proportion of Old North End residents have relocated from other parts of the US. This, along with recordings, radio, television and the internet have brought other regional singing repertoires into Burlington. This has significantly complicated the question of how to determine a local repertoire of traditional tunes and has resulted in older Vermont-specific repertoire being replaced with other versions of the same repertoire. (Jenny Jenkins) etc.

Existing Repertoire Within the School

The IAA has a rich repertoire of songs, chants and rhythmic and melodic tags which are used in the curriculum. Some of these were originally composed by current staff, some adopted from outside sources and some are of unclear origin and exist within the traditional knowledge of the school. This repertoire has been documented by the ONE Sings program in order to understand its role within the school and to affirm its importance as traditional and functional repertoire.

Skills developed in the Students

Rhythmic and melodic literacy. Memorization of common traditional repertoire, understanding of the social context of songs.

Particular emphasis has been given to songs which encourage cooperation and community improvement. This Little Light of Mine, Dry Bones,

Particular attempts have been made to fully involve ELL students through targeted reference to their culture and country of origin.

Particular attempts have been made to emphasize the African American source or much of the repertoire and the cultural context in which the music was created and transmitted.

This program has made efforts to empower teaching staff with the skills and affirmation needed for them to increase the use of singing within their classes.

The existing repertoire of songs and chants within the IAA community has been documented so that it can be understood and transmitted.

Religious material has been evaluated and occasionally modified to meet the schools goal of encouraging participation without marginalizing students.

Rhythmic literacy.

Counting in fours, maintaining consistent rhythm, following simple conducting and song leading.

Melodic literacy. Emphasizing holding a consistent unison tone. Singing basic scales, Discussing and experimenting with range issues.

Reassessing existing school curriculum bringing our experience to bear to sort out obsolete repertoire.

Methodology

Repertoire associated with the Historical Jewish community can be identified by.

Traditional repertoire present in the existing local Jewish community and derived from local cultural transmission.

Repertoire cited in historical documents.

Traditional repertoire from the origin communities in Belarus and Lithuania,

Repertoire from strongly connected communities such as Montreal and NYC.

Techniques of Cultural Inclusion.

The most basic way to affirm and encourage the participation of a child is to say their name and positively involve them in the group activity. On a cultural level, using the vocabulary, repertoire and numerical system and writing system of a child affirms the importance of those traditional forms.

Particulars:

With repertoire drawn from African American sources I have tried to present pictures of the authors and to clearly describe the role of the repertoire in the African American cultural context. A photo of Ella Jenkins was presented as a role model of a singer and song writer. (You Sing a Song and I'll Sing a Song) A photo of James Weldon Johnson was presented along with a description of his place in American history. (Dry Bones)

Skills and techniques of note.

Use of the crankie.

Workshop for Educators Conference.

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The workshop will discuss the development of the ONE Sings program and how traditional song repertoire is gathered and used to support existing school curriculum. Examples will be given in the use of traditional singing to support participation in classrooms combining native English speakers and English Language Learners.

Brian Perkins is a traditional musician who for three decades has focused on the long established immigrant traditions of Northern New England. Now after several generations of severely

restricted immigration, the floodgates of cultural enrichment have again been thrown open. Burlington's Old North End, historically the Vermont community most welcoming of immigrants, has become the home to almost a dozen distinct New American communities. Through innovative programming and with the perspective of a traditional folk musician, Brian Perkins will describe how the ONE Sings program is embracing this new reality.