

As described in Personal Growth Experience (PGE) 1, I attended a symposium on *Social Action Through Music* in response to a self-identified need to address a wider range of learners, due to higher poverty and greater diversity in my schools. This symposium gave me a deeper understanding of culturally responsive methods with respect to music curriculum and pedagogy, which when directly and indirectly applied, impacted student learning in my class and school-wide.

The broader context for the instructional focus of this component is the Black History Month (BHM) celebration at my middle school. Student engagement in the presentation, both in orchestra class and school-wide, was increased as a direct result of my PGE and my subsequent collaboration with the BHM team. The objective for this year's school-wide focus on African-American culture was the theme Famous Firsts. In order to help illustrate the theme, I developed a lesson on Marian Anderson, first Black-American woman to sing with the Metropolitan Opera Company, which I delivered to my class and distributed school-wide, to be taught the second week of the month-long celebration. The lesson included biographical text for students to read and discussion questions for the class to debate. Also included were URL's of internet videos of Ms. Anderson's historic Easter Sunday (1939) concert in Washington, D.C., and her recital of the African-American spiritual, "Deep River." The videos were of particular interest to my orchestra class because we were learning the spiritual in order to perform at the celebration.

My goals for the featured lessons were for students to understand (acquire knowledge and skill) and be able to perform contrasting selections chosen for the BHM program. The two selections, "Deep River" (arranged by Carrie Lane Gruselle) and "Rhythms of Africa" (composed by Soon Hee Newbold), were selected for their contrasting rhythms, harmonies and styles. "Deep River," with its lyrical writing, gave students the opportunity to practice slurs and

connected bow strokes. “Rhythms of Africa” utilized a more boisterous, percussive style with separate bow strokes, syncopated rhythms and even foot stomping. The harmonies in the second selection were diatonic, whereas the spiritual was more chromatic. The instrumentation of the spiritual was strictly stings, whereas the second selection utilized percussion and an authentic African drum called the djembe, as well as “body percussion” in the strings.

This instruction is important to these learners as developing musicians. For these third- and fourth-year players, grade 2-2.5 level literature is developmentally appropriate and challenging to promote growth. (IV). The repertoire reinforces technical performance skills of basic rhythms (quarter, eighth, sixteenth, syncopation), keys (D and G major) and range (first position), as well as contrasting styles (fluid and lyrical vs. articulate and rhythmic). This instruction broadens students’ aesthetic understanding of musical styles, which is important for acquisition of repertoire that explores contrasting historical periods and cultures. (VI) Both selections are suited to the Black History Month theme, but each explores a different perspective of the multi-cultural experience, one through the style of the African-American spiritual and the other through the style of an African celebration dance.

Prior to this PGE, our celebration was confined to the limits of an hour program, presented to each grade, in which my contribution was to provide one musical selection performed by the orchestra. Pursuant to the PGE, I began to think more critically about the potential cultural and historical value the event could provide. I no longer saw my role as entertainer, but instead, saw my renewed role as a facilitator of instruction. I collaborated with colleagues of several disciplines to expand the event to a month-long celebration, which has evolved to include daily student announcements, weekly lessons, as well as a culminating program featuring the arts (writing, performing, dancing, drama) in presenting a yearly theme.

My contribution has expanded to now include providing a historical lesson to fit the theme (Famous Firsts) and preparing the orchestra for the performance of two selections.

In the evolution of the PGE, these activities are the culmination of professional growth, presented in a multi cultural program with a focus on Famous First in African-American history. The orchestral presentation represents the most visible aspect of my contribution. However, working to present school-wide lessons and collaborating with a team of teachers across disciplines to showcase the celebration through the performing arts, advanced the evolution of a school program (VI) designed to meet the educational and cultural needs of our diverse student population.

When viewed as a whole, the student performance featured on the video reflects evidence of student learning. All students were engaged in the performance and delivered an enthusiastic interpretation. Students maintained visual contact with the director and responded appropriately to my conducting gestures, which communicated style, dynamics, tempo and expression. (II) String students used bow speed and a full range of movement to create a characteristic string sound. Percussion students performed with correct technique and attention to balance, commensurate to the strings section. Performing in a small string section (3 violin I, 5 violin II, 5 viola, 2 cello, 1 bass), students demonstrated a great degree of independence on their parts and interdependence (V) in their ensemble technique. Students maintained good performance posture throughout and a few demonstrated vibrato. For the most part, bowings were synchronized and reflected a lyrical style with long bows and slurs, and a syncopated, rhythmic style with shorter strokes at the frog, respectively for each piece. Though still developing, pitch accuracy reflected the D and G major keys with the exception of a few out of tune half steps. Rhythms were accurate. In “Deep River,” students achieved nuance of tempo and dynamics

similar to the way Marian Anderson performed in the You Tube video recording the students studied.

Most importantly, students demonstrated learning through application. Students were active, integral participants, not passive witnesses, in the sharing and celebration of African-American culture. Rather than read about or listen to authentic African drumming and stomping, the musicians were applying the technique in performance. Rather than hear about the style of the spiritual, the students were experiencing the fluid motions and executing the chromatic harmonies that accompanied the song. Through their performance, the students demonstrated understanding of two unique styles and musical contexts, and differentiated the two in their interpretations.