



The TEACHER CENTER of Broome County
Teacher Study Group Grant Award
Summer 2004

FINAL REPORT
DOCUMENT PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

STUDY GROUP TOPIC: Learning Through Original Songs and Music

List of group members: Eric Sutton, Tami Crane, Jarod McMullen, Tracey Rowe, Melanie Rosen-Valent

The final report must be word-processed and submitted both in print and on disk using this form. Include information under each of the following headings.

Describe the initial goal of the group noting any adjustments that had to be made as time passed.

The purpose of our group was to develop new instructional learning techniques through original music. Our goal was to develop these songs to facilitate learning with students and promote character education. Our initial intent was to make each of the songs we wrote specific to Chenango Forks Elementary but we soon found that this restriction hampered the range and ultimately the quality of the songs we were working on. We adjusted by making some songs specific to Chenango Forks where appropriate.

Describe the ACTION PLAN that the group followed.

Our action plan was to meet with ideas ready on specific areas to cover in song. We examined the current music and songs that are used at Chenango Forks with our students and identified areas that we thought could be covered better and where possible made specific to our school.

Describe how the action plan was implemented.

The action plan was implemented by all of us meeting together with a cd/tape player and guitar. We would discuss the ideas we each had and talked about the possibility of creating a song around each idea or theme. We decided to create a mix of songs taking familiar

melodies and writing new words, and also write some fully original tunes with original music and lyrics. The benefit of using familiar tunes was that we thought it would be easy to introduce new concepts and have our elementary children learn the songs quickly since the tunes themselves were familiar. It also helped to assist us with our own learning curve as 'songwriters' to start with a familiar melody and then work together to create original lyrics. With the wholly original tunes we would create an original tune on the guitar and then build lyrics around that tune according to a theme we decided on. All group members would contribute ideas and help to refine and tweak the song.

Evaluation of the impact of the study group effort on teacher/student performance.

- How has this study group changed you as a teacher? Do you anticipate that any of your teaching practices will have changed?

The group felt that as a result of this songwriting experience that we will be able to come up with additional songs individually as we see the need or the opportunity arises in the classroom. The group feels that there is a very definite learning curve and while not all of us are able to write original music we are confident that we can individually take familiar tunes and create our own lyrics to them using the content we want to teach to our students.

- What evidence do you expect to see of student achievement is improving as a result of your participating in this study group?

With the ability now to put subjects to music our elementary children will have another learning modality to help them retain the information. Music has been shown to be a powerful medium for conveying information (see the success of commercial and advertising jingles) not to mention that is also a fun way to learn!

- What evidence is there that the goals of the study group has/has not been met?

The tangible product of having written eleven songs (seven with original lyrics to familiar tunes, and four with both original lyrics and music) is physical evidence that we have met the goal of developing songs to facilitate learning with students and to promote character education in our school. All members of the group agree that they now have some new skills

to take back with them to the classroom which is also evidence of having acquired new instructional learning techniques.

Comment on the value of the study group process? Did it work for you?

In the beginning it was a daunting task to write new original songs. We were embarrassed to share our first attempts with each other. Initially we attempted to write on our own in a solitary fashion. As the group became more comfortable with sharing ideas and feeling confident that we were supportive of one another, we quickly realized that with all of us working together the quality of the songs increased through collaboration. As a result our final product is much stronger than any one member of the group could have produced. It was also a very enjoyable experience!

How can we make this study group program better?

We can't think of anything that could be improved on at this point. Hopefully these types of study group grants will continue. We feel we have a very useful product in our songs that we can now bring back to our colleagues and students, as well as having learned a new skill. While we still have much to learn it was a great beginning.