

Trauma, Music, and Healing: The Power of Music to Transform a Classroom

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Abstract

“Trauma, Music, and Healing: The Power of Music to Transform a Classroom” is a unit that explores the impact of trauma (toxic stress) and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) on the brain and their impact on a child’s ability to comprehend and process information. Researchers have discovered that ACEs are extremely common and that children experiencing toxic stress undergo changes to the brain which make them incapable of processing information without interventions. Arguments will be made for the need for interventions to help our students become more resilient in the face of adversity. This unit suggests that in order to combat toxic stress, there is a need for the presence of a stable, caring adult in a child’s life, and encourages the use of music in the classroom, not only to help students regulate their emotions, but also to bring emotional healing. This unit will explore ways to address the emotional needs of our students through embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) and music into every subject while helping them to become more successful in the classroom. The strategies in this unit are designed for use in the middle school Digital Literacy classroom and incorporate the use of technology to create digital projects. These lessons, however, can be adapted for both older and younger students in just about any classroom setting.

Keywords: social-emotional learning (SEL), Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs), trauma, music, toxic stress, resilience, mental health, emotional health, writing, ELA, Digital Literacy, middle school

Being a teacher in the 21st century carries challenges that no one could have imagined 100 years ago. Teachers are now expected to be counselor, nurse (especially when your school has no nurse), mentor, mediator, tutor, motivator, coach, and mom/dad/grandmom (any teacher who has been called mom or grandmom knows what I am talking about!) We are expected to provide food, clothing, school supplies, hygiene supplies, Band-aids, and Kleenex, in addition to love, guidance, discipline, patience, and instruction. Perhaps “expected” is too strong of a word, but any good teacher knows that it is not possible to do our jobs well without meeting the daily and immediate needs of our students. Students whose basic needs are not met cannot learn. Students who are hungry cannot focus. If students lack the basic necessities they need to be successful, they cannot be successful in learning.

Today, our students face more obstacles to learning than ever before. The global pandemic has affected our students in ways we are still learning about. We expected the loss of learning to occur, especially in students who did not participate in virtual learning, but the loss of social skills caused by isolation, the difficulty relating to peers and adults, and the loss of loved ones during the pandemic created a different level of trauma. When poverty, childhood trauma

(e.g., child abuse/sexual abuse), violence in the home and community, substance abuse, and other Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are added to the equation, the odds become exponentially stacked against our children, especially in urban settings. It is extremely important, now more than ever, that these issues be addressed in order to help our students not only survive but thrive.

There was a time when it was believed that damage done to a person's brain because of childhood trauma (or any type of trauma) was basically irreversible. We are now learning through studies on the neuroplasticity of the brain that healing of the brain is possible. "Neuroplasticity" refers to your brain's ability to restructure or rewire itself when it recognizes the need for adaptation. In other words, it can continue developing and changing throughout life." (Healthline, 2020). According to the Healthline article, "6 Ways to Re-wire Your Brain," music can improve mood, improve the ability to learn and remember new information, and increase concentration and focus, especially when combined with dance, art, gaming, and exercise. It can also help to strengthen memory abilities regulate emotions.

This unit will look at the nature of trauma and its effect on student's ability to comprehend and process information, the impact on their motivation or lack thereof to process information, and to establish the reasons why there is a need for interventions to help our students become more resilient. This unit will also explore the use of music in the classroom, not only to help students regulate their emotions, but also to bring emotional healing. This unit will explore ways to address the emotional needs of our students while helping them to be more successful in the classroom.

In addition to addressing interventions that will help our students, it is important to recognize that teachers are dealing with trauma as well. Sometimes teachers are dealing with their own stresses and personal trauma. Teachers may also experience second-hand or vicarious traumatization as they deal with their students' trauma. Unfortunately, this trauma may also occur as a direct result of violence inflicted upon the teacher by their student(s). Most often, it is a combination of the above. Therefore, in looking for ways to help our students become more resilient, we must also address the need for teachers to engage in their own self-care as well. Music has the potential to be a great part of this process. I would like to share a personal story that illustrates this point.

I am writing this curriculum as coursework for a graduate seminar I am taking, entitled "Music and Healing," taught by Professor Carol Mueller at the University of Pennsylvania. The first part of the seminar explored trauma and its impact on the brain. After reading several articles on trauma, watching several documentaries on trauma, and compiling stories about the types of traumas experienced by students in my school, I was overwhelmed. The addition of back-to-back ministry commitments, work responsibilities, and personal life obligations created the perfect storm. While I was able to continue with my normal routines with great success, I found that I could not engage in more trauma research or writing. I just could not go there.

One weekend, however, I found myself absorbed with what I call "intimate worship music." I listened to songs about being drawn into the Presence of the Lord and not wanting to leave, songs where I talked to God and He talked to me, and I listened to certain parts of those songs over and over again. I found myself in a space where I felt peace. I felt heard and

understood and loved. I felt safe. I felt held. While listening, I revisited the documentaries and was able to take notes. I re-read the article, “The Body Keeps the Score,” and found that I could process the information and compile notes for this unit. The thing that amazed me the most, was that while reading this article on trauma, I drifted off to sleep and got the best night’s sleep I had gotten in a long while! When I awoke around 3AM, I felt this incredible sense of peace, and still feeling “held,” I drifted off to sleep again. I realized that the music had taken me to a safe place where the “trauma” could not touch me. It provided not just an escape, but a buffer.

The next morning, I knew that this new understanding was the gift I wanted to give my students. Music has the powerful ability to heal and transform, but it does not have to be one particular style or genre of music. It does, however, need to be meaningful to the listener. So, part of the process would involve helping each student discover what music helps them to relax, to calm down, or to focus, while being productive in the classroom. Another part could involve other interventions such as drawing or painting, writing, or breathing exercises that could be done while listening to music or done separately. In addition to socio-emotional regulation, music can also be used to teach and reinforce concepts, subjects, or skills.

I am a middle school Digital Literacy teacher, teaching students in grades 5-8 in urban Philadelphia. My background is teaching middle school English Language Arts, but I also have a Master’s in clinical counseling. Approximately 80% of my students are African American or African, but the other 20% are Hispanic, Asian or Middle Eastern, Caucasian, and of mixed races. About 20-25% of these students are English Language Learners (ELLs) and 25-30% have Individualized Education Plans (IEPs). Some students are ELLs with IEPs. My school is a Title 1 school where 99% of my students are eligible for free lunch.

My classes are taught in a computer lab. Each student has their own headphones attached to their computer and responds to each activity by creating digital products. Therefore, this unit will have a heavy technology component for use with my students. Many of the activities, however, can be completed with/without the use of a computer in an ELA classroom, during socio-learning or morning meetings, or throughout the day in any classroom setting. My focus will be on instruction with middle school students, but many of the concepts, strategies, and activities will be relevant for younger and older students as well.

Why is this curriculum unit necessary? I believe that educators will be more successful in educating their students if they have a better understanding of the things that are hindering their students from learning. Toxic stress is one of the key factors. Addressing social emotional learning, not just in the earlier grades, but in every grade, will help to make students more resilient. This will also use music and social emotional learning to:

- Teach students how to express and regulate their emotions appropriately
- Build community and create a sense of belonging
- Increase academic performance
- Unleash creative potential

Unit Content

The unit is divided into three sections: a discussion of ACEs, a focus on music as a vehicle for self-regulation, and the classroom lessons.

SECTION ONE- How Can We Combat the Effects of Toxic Stress? The Presence of a Stable, Caring Adult

In this first section I provide a number of quotes from documentaries and articles interspersed with commentary that explains the background of what is going on when children undergo toxic stress and how this impacts their ability to learn in the classroom. It will also stress the importance of addressing these factors in order to maximize the learning potential in the classroom and develop resiliency to combat toxic stress in the future and continue to be successful.

So, what exactly is *toxic stress*? According to the documentary, *Paper Tigers*, “toxic stress is a term used to describe traumatic experiences in childhood which threaten healthy brain development and are associated with lifelong health and social problems. Increasingly, researchers are identifying toxic stress as a key contributor to epidemics of poverty, violence, and disease.” (Pritzker, Redford, & KPJR ,2015) In today’s world, it is nearly impossible to avoid toxic stress. Therefore, it is imperative that there are supports in place to help our students navigate this terrain. So, how does toxic stress/trauma affect our brains?

The Body Keeps the Score (Van Der Kolk, 2019)

Research by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has shown that one in five Americans was sexually molested as a child; one in four was beaten by a parent to the point of a mark being left on their body; and one in three couples engage in physical violence. A quarter of us grew up with alcoholic relatives, and one out of eight witnessed their mother being beaten or hit...Long after a traumatic experience is over, it may be reactivated by the slightest hint of danger and mobilize disturbed brain circuits and secrete massive amounts of stress hormones.

There are several new disciplines developed in recent years that are helping us to better understand the effect trauma can have on the brain. These new disciplines are neuroscience, the study of how the brain supports mental processes; developmental psychopathology, the study of the impact of adverse experiences of the development of mind and brain; and interpersonal neurobiology, the study of how our behavior influences the emotions, biology, and mind-sets of those around us.

Research from these new disciplines has revealed that trauma produces actual physiological changes, including a recalibration of the brain’s alarm system, an increase in stress hormone activity, and alterations in the system that filters relevant information from irrelevant. We now know that trauma compromises the brain area that communicates the physical, embodied feeling of being alive. These changes explain why traumatized individuals become hypervigilant to threat at the expense of spontaneously engaging in their day-to-day lives. They also help us

understand why traumatized people so often keep repeating the same problems and have such trouble learning from experience. We now know that their behaviors are not the result of moral failings or signs of lack of willpower or bad character—they are caused by actual changes in the brain.

However, imprints from the past can be transformed by having physical experiences that directly contradict the helplessness, rage, and collapse that are part of trauma.

“According to research about childhood trauma, all of the risk factors for adverse childhood experiences can be offset by one thing—the presence of a stable, caring adult in a child’s life.” (Pritzker, Redford, & KPJR ,2015) This is where the educator comes in. A caring, stable, educator can make all the difference in the world when it comes to changing the trajectory of a child’s life. This is what I strive for every day—to be that one caring, stable adult in my children’s lives. I never assume that someone else is doing this, though I certainly hope that I am not the only one. And this is who the educators were at Lincoln High School, as represented in the documentary, *Paper Tigers*. Watching this documentary had a very profound effect on me and I chose to include many of the quotes from the educators here in this unit, mostly because I do not believe that the documentary is accessible outside of a university library, but also because they resonate with the kinds of interactions that should be present in all learning communities.

Quotes from the Documentary *Paper Tigers* (Pritzker, Redford, & KPJR ,2015)

(Note: These quotes, obtained from the transcript of the documentary are not necessarily grammatically correct. I have also interspersed my own personal commentary throughout.)

ERIK GORDON (teacher talking about his students): Rage, anger...anything could set them off. They don’t know the difference between a real tiger and a paper tiger. You have to unconditionally love them, and you have to believe that their behavior might be out of their control. And that piece is so hard for educators to swallow. And that pill is a bitter, bitter pill. It does not feel like you’re setting them up for success when you know they’re gonna enter a world of hard knocks. They’re gonna have somebody that’s signing their paycheck that, when they tell them to f--- off, they’re just gonna fire’em on the spot. They’re not gonna look at them and say, “Are you okay You know, are...how’s it going? What’s going on in your life right now? It seems like you’re having a tough day today.” Like, that’s not life. They’re never gonna have that in life. But you’ve got to back up and say, “Okay, wait a minute. Grounded in research that says that the most impactful thing that this kid can have for their future is a caring relationship with a caring adult that gets them and truly understands them.

This indeed is the struggle for teachers working in difficult environments and with challenging students. While the majority of educators may indeed be caring, stable adults, there often is not enough support given to teachers when they are overwhelmed by what is going on in the lives of their students and in their own personal lives. Teachers should receive the same types of support they need while caring for their students. This is far too often the missing portion of the equation. Teachers are expected to be superhuman while dealing with students who are

unruly, verbally (and sometimes physically) abusive, disrespectful, and low achieving. Those in the counseling profession realize that in order to be their best for their clients, they must engage in consistent self-care for themselves. Teachers often do not realize that the same is true for them as well. This is why this unit is so important. The same strategies for acknowledging and regulating emotions using music will work for children as well as for adults.

PATRICK KOFFLER (teacher): I love playing guitar with him (student). I love playing with, like several of these guys. They...I like the fact that we don't have to talk. That's...that's the biggest piece, you know? The lack of talking, and then you...there's still that communication going on. I think that's...that's huge. For some reason, I feel like that's almost as strong as anything we ever do in class.

In this portion of the documentary, the teacher is playing guitar along with his students, connecting with them, communicating with them, without even using words. One student is singing an original song, and he is clearly sharing a part of who he is in this moment. Often, students do not see their teachers as humans with feelings and emotions. They do not realize that teachers can have tough days, suffer loss, be cranky when they have not had enough sleep, and experience many of the same struggles as their students. Shared experiences, like playing or listening to music together, laughing together, or sharing candid conversations can go a long way towards helping to build community in a classroom. Music has a tremendous potential to heal hearts. When students begin to feel heard and understood, both teacher and student can benefit from this shared exchange.

PATRICK KOFFLER (teacher): Academics has been very important, but it falls in second to the person as a whole, and, like, making a better human being. Tools just for, you know, getting along and being able to communicate how they feel and advocating for themselves, and just all these little lessons and positive encouragement...You hope you have a good interaction with them on Friday or some reason for them...to get them to come back on Monday.

Far too often, there is such a tremendous emphasis on testing and demonstrating academic proficiency in our schools, that there is very little, if any attention paid to developing the whole child. What about the emotional and spiritual needs of our students? What about the students who are going through so much at home that it is nearly impossible for them to focus on or even care about what is being taught in the classroom?

This was very clearly illustrated when we in Philadelphia returned to the classroom after nearly a year and a half of virtual learning during the global COVID pandemic. We went back to business as usual, but there was no acknowledgement of the fact that many students (and teachers) had lost parents, grandparents, aunts/uncles, siblings, primary caregivers, or friends. No one knew because no one asked, and yet teachers were expected to pick up where we left off and teach, and students were expected to come back into the classroom and learn. And nearly two years later, I am discovering, through impromptu discussion circles, that my students have suffered tremendous losses from the pandemic, on top of the losses already being suffered from **an** epidemic of gun violence in our communities. No one has given them the opportunity to share their grief, express their loneliness, acknowledge their concerns about food insecurity, or just talk about anything meaningful to them. We knew that we had to make up for their academic deficits,

but no one realized how deep the social, emotional, and mental losses were. I know that no one knew how to cope during a global pandemic, but I believe that we have failed our students in the social emotional area in particular. Thus, the need for more curriculum units like this one.

ALISON KIRBY (co-founder of Lincoln’s health center): I think the biggest failure we have right now with these young girls is not acknowledging how poor their self-worth is. I mean, that can go all the way from what media teaches you of...of what’s sexy and what’s attractive about women, to a lot of these girls either have father figures that aren’t active or aren’t positive. And some are to have never been seen. So that’s one...gonna be something that they’re seeking continuously. You know, we...we push so hard for, you know, “We got...we got to have sex ed. Look at all these kids getting pregnant.” I do agree that they need to know what to use, but I think people are skipping right past the bigger issue, which is positive, healthy relationships, and understanding their worth.

Allison Kirby identifies a core issue that many students struggle with—low self-esteem and poor self-worth, coupled with a lack of positive, healthy relationships. I believe that educators should be positive role models in their students’ lives. Many adults can look back in their lives and name at least one teacher that played a significant role in personal growth. That is the main reason I became a teacher—I wanted to give back (or pay forward) what I received and that changed the trajectory of my life.

BROOKE BOUCHEY (intervention specialist): Well, everybody keeps talking about addressing the drugs. My thing is, we need to address what is causing them to use these drugs. That’s what we need to figure out.

A lot of these young women coming through here... I mean, what...our last one was over one in four of these girls have been sexually assaulted. I think it was one in three. So, you’re talking one in every three girls you see walking down this hallway who has such little self-worth, because of all of these events that have built up and have never had a chance to talk it out, because they don’t have a safe environment to do that processing in.

It’s not that I’m judging you. I know why you’re smoking weed. I know why you smoke meth. You don’t want to feel. I mean, that’s the big challenge. I’m asking you to try feeling for a little bit. Because sometimes when you feel, it guides you in the direction that you should be going, and not to where you are.

Brooke Bouchey, the intervention specialist, recognizes that behavior stems from core issues that need to be addressed before learning can take place. She specifically identifies the fact that drug usage among her students stems from abuse, poor self-worth, and other issues that have not been processed in the absence of a safe place to do so.

ERIK GORDON (teacher): The behavior isn’t the kid. The behavior is...is a symptom of what’s going on in their life. Behavior isn’t about me. In some ways, the behavior’s not even about the kid, you know? And you can forgive, and work on it, like modeling a good, normal, healthy relationship.

Having this attitude is a challenge for teachers whose classes are overloaded with too many students. One student with challenging behaviors can disrupt a classroom, so several students, especially adolescent students, carrying emotional baggage that has not been addressed can spell disaster for a classroom.

JIM SPORLEDER (principal): I see our system really judging kids on their outward appearance, and how they react and behave, versus trying to find out what the cause is. It's the pain that these kids carry within themselves. You know, it would be easy to take the route...just let'em fight, suspend'em, and get them out of here. I mean, that would be the easy way out. But through our experience, we know that if you seek the cause and give students self-worth, then you...you...you can get to that point where that behavior starts to change.

Some may wonder why there is such an emphasis on addressing the behaviors teachers see and experience every day in the classroom. Why be so concerned about their mental and emotional health? Because their mental and emotional health drives their behaviors, and their challenging behaviors stand in the way of them being able to be actively engaged in their learning. Teachers cannot teach students effectively without addressing these issues because students cannot learn when they are in survival mode. Learning is just not a priority. When students have undergone trauma, the prefrontal cortex of the brain shuts down. This is the thinking and processing center of the brain, and when it is shut down, a person has no capacity to tell a story. (Van Der Kolk, 2019)

Brooke Bouchey (intervention specialist) Everything these kids have to go through to get here...I'm blown away that these kids get up and come here every day and are willing to engage with us. Why do some of them make it, and why do some of them not? I like to think that I got to contribute to some of those kids that make it...that they had that one, or two, or three people in their life that didn't give up on them.

One of the goals of this unit is to inspire educators to be that one person in a child's life that does not give up on them. It has been said that it takes a village to raise a child, and this is true, but the village is suffering right now, and all it takes to turn a child around is one person that genuinely cares about them, stands in the gap for them, and pushes them beyond what they believe is possible for them.

JIM SPORLEDER (principal): The beauty about ACEs is, though the outcomes are incredibly accurate and predictable with no interventions, there's tremendous hope with interventions. (When teachers are)...nonjudgmental, loving them unconditionally, wrapping in support, and then teaching them...these are the people that teach you the resiliency, and to become the person that you were meant to be.

Quotes from the Documentary *Resilience* (Pritzker, Redford, & KPJR ,2015)

ROBERT ANDA (epidemiologist for CDC and ACE study developer): So the first thing we found is that adverse childhood experiences are common. 28% had been physically abused, 27% grew up with substance abuse in their homes, 13% witnessed their mothers being physically abused. One in five had been sexually abused. I was the first person to see this data. While I was in my study, I had the software on my computer. I saw this and I wept. I had no idea how much adversity, and abuse, and neglect, and violence there was in our culture. There were 10 types of adversity... And I saw that as the score went up, all of these major public health problems that we collected as part of the survey went up in stepwise fashion.

Robert Anda was one of the original researchers for the ACE study. The ACE study interviewed white, middle to upper class adults about their childhood experiences and made correlations between the number of ACES they had experienced and the health and social problems they were experiencing.

The 10 ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

1. Parents divorced or separated
2. Physical abuse
3. Physical neglect
4. Emotional abuse
5. Emotional neglect
6. Sexual abuse
7. Witnessed domestic violence
8. Substance abuse in the household
9. Mental illness in the household
10. Family member in prison

The Philadelphia Expanded ACE Questions also look at Community-Level Adversity (2012, 2013)

<https://www.philadelphiaaces.org/philadelphia-ace-survey>

11. Witness Violence—How often, if ever, did you see or hear someone being beaten up, stabbed or shot in real life?
12. Felt Discrimination—While you were growing up, how often did you feel that you were treated badly or unfairly because of your race or ethnicity?
13. Adverse Neighborhood Experiences—Did you feel safe in your neighborhood? Did you feel that people in your neighborhood looked out for each other, stood up for each other, and could be trusted?
14. Bullied—How often were you bullied by a peer or classmate?
15. Lived in Foster Care—Were you ever in foster care?

The findings of the original ACE study indicated the following:

- A person with an ACE score of 3 out of 10 is twice as likely to develop heart disease.
- A person with an ACE score of 4 out of 10 has twice the risk of cancer and stroke, is 3 times as likely to suffer depression, 7 times more likely to end up in prison, and 12 times more likely to attempt suicide.
- A person with an ACE score of 6 out of 10 will have 20 years lower life expectancy.

The findings of the Philadelphia study were correct in predicting that students growing up in urban settings, such as Philadelphia would be exposed to more levels of toxic stress. I have certainly found this to be true for the students that I have worked with over the past twenty-five years. My hypothesis is that if students were interviewed as children to determine their ACE scores, interventions could take place earlier in order to prevent the very predictable outcomes and give students a much better chance at being successful and healthy in life.

JACK SHONKOFF (Director, Center for the Developing Child, Harvard University): [The common understanding is] You know, kids are young, they're very resilient. They don't know what's going on, they won't remember anyway. Well, the child may not remember, but the body remembers.

Jack Shonda echoes the same sentiments as found in "The Body Keeps the Score." Long after the experience of trauma has passed, the body continues to respond, to react, as though the trauma were still happening. The memory of the trauma is in the body, and the body responds to toxic stress in unregulated ways, which teachers see in the classroom every day. Because the prefrontal cortex is shut down, the child cannot tell the story, so all teachers see is the behavior, which rarely makes any sense in the present classroom setting.

ROBERT ANDA (epidemiologist for CDC, 1984-2014): We didn't know that all of these kind of problems have a common cause...you mean Adverse Childhood Experiences cause heart disease, lung disease, liver disease, and cancer?

So, while this unit will focus on the implications of ACEs on academics, it stands to reason that addressing these factors in children will also have a long-term positive effect on a child's health down the road.

NADINE BURKE HARRIS (Bayview Hunters Point pediatric clinic, Surgeon General of California, 2019-2022): The impact [of ACES] is on your behavior. It's on your learning. It's on your heart. It's on your DNA, like how do you...how do you deal with all that stuff?

Dr. Nadine Burke Harris recognized in her pediatric practice that adverse childhood experiences had an impact on every area of a child's life—their health, their behavior, how well they are doing in school, and how they feel about themselves. She began to screen all her patients for ACEs.

VICTOR CARRION (psychiatrist at Stanford University studying anxiety and behavior disorders in children): But there's actually something functional changing in their brain and it's interesting how much activity overall they have when processing all types of emotions. It would be sad, fearful, angry. We tend to look at the world of mental health separate from the world of physical health. But the body doesn't do that...the body's only one.

Dr. Victor Carrion lends support to the idea that mental health and physical health need to be addressed together because one impacts the other. I would say that the same is true for addressing SEL and academic learning simultaneously for exactly the same reason.

NADINE BURKE HARRIS (Bayview Hunters Point pediatric clinic, Surgeon General of California, 2019-2022): Stressful or traumatic things can affect the health of kids. And so one of the things that we do here is that we screen all of our patients for what we call Adverse Childhood Experiences...We don't need to know which ones, we only need to know how many...We found that for kids at the baby care health center, if they had an ACE score of four or more, they were 32 times likely to have learning or behavior problems in school. 32 times more likely, right, than if you had an ACE score of zero...Exposure to early adversity and trauma literally affects the structure and function of children's developing brains.

The initial ACES study was with adults who looked back to their childhood ACES experience; Nadine Burke Harris runs a clinic in low income part of the Bay area and she sees the challenges that ACES bring to children in real time—expressed in the classroom and at home—dysregulated behavior, struggle to focus (immediately diagnosed as ADHD, but she says it is more about the memory of adversity and toxic stress on the child's body.) This statistic that she quotes is absolutely stunning! A child with an ACE score of four is 32 times more likely to have learning or behavior problems. This demonstrates why it is so important that educators implement interventions in our school to teach our children to become resilient.

JACK SHONKOFF: You know if I had to boil this down to one thing for people to learn from this science is to totally put to bed forever the sense that children who are born under disadvantaged circumstances are doomed to poor life outcomes. The scientists are saying that that's just not true.

Everybody likes to talk about resilience...What's resilience? The one thing we know...is it's not something we are born with. It's something that gets built over time.

Can you learn how to deal with conflict constructively when you grow up hearing your parents screaming at each other every night? Can you learn how to focus your attention when you live in a neighborhood where you hear gunshots and sirens? Can you control your impulses when you never know whether your father with a drinking problem is going to strike out in a rage? Can you delay gratification when all your friends around you are doing drugs? Can you plan for the future when it's hard to get through even a single day?

Scientific research points to the presence of a stable, caring adult in a child's life as the key to building the keys of resilience.

SECTION TWO—How Can We Combat the Effects of Toxic Stress? Using Music in the Classroom

In this section I provide a handful of readings that focus on the work of music in emotional regulation, and a discussion of social emotional wellness. Then I move on to instructional strategies to promote social-emotional wellness through musical engagement.

“Hip Hop as an Agent for Health and Wellbeing in Schools: A Narrative Synthesis of Existing Research” (Crook, et al, 2020)

Hill (2009) described a program that used Hip Hop texts to teach English in the school curriculum, indicating its inherent pedagogical nature. Yet, by using this setting to analyze Hip Hop texts that themselves provided a “democratic space,” teachers were able to facilitate a space where students could explore their own narratives of pain, suffering, and injustice. This enabled students to share and connect with others with similar stories, express themselves, and form a sense of community.

Emdin, Adjapong, and Levy (2016) report on the benefits of a science program that used the composition of raps for “engaging in and with rigorous science content” (p. 308). While a primary intention and outcome of this program was to support student learning in the science curriculum, authors reported that through the act of writing and reflecting on their rhymes, students were able to express aspects of their life experiences and become more connected with their emotions. Again, conscious facilitation by teachers enabled a space where students could foster a sense of agency and social connection with their teachers and each other. They described this as, “the merging of the ‘first space’ of traditional STEM education and the ‘second space’ of mental health/counseling to create a third space where urban youths can release tensions that result from trauma they experience” (p. 310). These examples indicate that Educational Interventions depend less on the nature of information being delivered and more on the spaces facilitated by teachers for students to engage with Hip Hop as a way to process their own experiences.

This article demonstrates that research has been highlighting the benefits of using music to help students process their own trauma in an educational setting.

“**Music Makers: Music and Healing - Music That Leads to Healing**” (Clements-Cortés, 2010)

Alex (client) told me on several occasions that “music” was just what he needed. Music was important in providing him with an avenue to express very difficult feeling and emotions. He stated, “This music therapy is exactly what I need.” This was so important for me to hear and helped me re-affirm my decision to use music in the health care setting. The concept that music and emotion are linked is

discussed by Salmon (1993) who explains that music and emotion contain multiple themes simultaneously; are made up of an interplay between tension and resolution; use symbolic expression; move through time and are defined largely by time; and exist in the realm of relationship. Music acts as a non-verbal catalyst of our feelings, which helps evoke an emotional response, in turn releasing information stored in memories and facilitating the expression of feelings both pleasant and more difficult to deal with. It was at that point that I realized that music not only was a powerful tool for me, but it was for others as well, and that music helps create sacred spaces.

This article speaks to creating “sacred spaces” where students can learn and grow and heal. I think there is a greater emphasis on this in the earlier grades, but I believe that it should be continued throughout all the grades. We have just come through a global pandemic where students spent more than an entire school year in virtual learning. The reality is that some students never engaged in learning online, and yet when we returned to the classroom all were socially promoted to the next grade. How are those students ever going to be able to make up what was lost? It is safe to assume that all our students can benefit from efforts to create safe spaces for students to process trauma so that they can engage in the learning process.

“Music Education and Social-Emotional Learning” (Edgar, 2019)

Scott N. Edgar, Ph.D., sums up the responsibility educators have to teach children and to incorporate music and SEL into whatever subject is taught in school.

We do not teach music; we teach children music. Because they trust us, we are in the perfect position to help them not only encounter the accidentals in music, but to confront the accidentals in their lives with strength and skill.

For SEL to be most effective, it needs to be embedded in curriculum. For me, the music teacher can do this in a much more authentic way—*through* music.

SECTION THREE

Personal Research with my Students

Below is the Google link to the student responses given in an activity I did with a group of 8th graders and again with a group of 7th graders. It was called “Wishes” and included prompts such as the following:

1. Name one thing you wish you had never seen _____.
2. Name one thing you wish you had never heard _____.
3. I wish _____ would forgive me.
4. I wish I could forgive _____.
5. I wish there was no _____ in the world.

Wishes Inventory (Student Responses)

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1s92_UhSBN2_GsFFp4QJD5kji-Ny4TI_7LyYQgT5VXU/edit?usp=sharing

I compiled their responses because I wanted to bear witness to the kinds of trauma my students have experienced and because I wanted other educators to catch a glimpse of the kinds of things their students may be experiencing as well. I learned that oftentimes, teachers/adults do not know these things about our children because we do not ask. We also do not form the trusting relationships with our students, nor do we create the safe spaces that allow them to share what is important to them. This is partially because schools place such an emphasis on the academic aspect of school that they neglect the fact that their students are struggling with so many issues that hinder their ability to do well academically. I believe that if we could address those issues, our students would improve academically. Part of the problem is that a handful of students are receiving intensive counseling services (if they have insurance), but the overwhelming majority of students have no one listening to them on a deeper level.

I created an inventory of fill-in-the-blank questions that they answered anonymously. The students did not respond to this inventory “out-of-the-blue,” but after we had had several group sessions where they responded to similar discussion prompts openly. I also did an informal assessment of some of the ACE and ACE-type questions in these circles. What really surprised me was that they wanted me to ask them questions. One student kept asking me every time we gathered together, “Did you think of any more questions to ask us?” They would ask me as they entered the room, “Can we do the circle thing again?”

Sometimes they gave me the questions to ask the group. I recognized immediately that they were really asking, “Has anyone else gone through this besides me?” What I found really healing was the fact that no one was the only one. One student exclaimed to another student, “Your mother abandoned you, too?” I realized the importance and the power of such an encounter. Students connected with each other on a deeper level than normally experienced in a classroom setting, but these connections created a kind of community where students realized that they were not alone.

Of the twenty-three students that voluntarily responded to the inventory, every single one of them gave responses that indicated that they had experienced a significant amount of trauma—100% of them! When I thought about the responses I would get if every single student in the school responded, I was overwhelmed. I realized that the amount of unaddressed trauma in the lives of my students was astronomical and that this needed to be addressed as a school and as a district. I know that the advisory teachers in my school conduct morning meetings (and I am not an advisory teacher), but I do not know if what I did with my students was different than what was being done in their advisories, but I do know they lasted longer than 15 minutes, and provided a powerful incentive for students to complete their projects so they could participate.

Teaching Strategies

Journal Writing

Over the years, I have used journaling as a way to connect with my students. On a few occasions, I have given them a specific writing prompt to respond to, or I have given them a list of prompts to choose from (for those students who never know what to write). Mostly, I have given them the liberty to write whatever is meaningful to them and to communicate whatever they needed to say at the time. I promised to not only read, but also to respond to whatever they wrote. To encourage them to share candidly, I gave them the option of writing, but folding the page if there was something they did not want or were not ready for me to read. I would give them a grade based on the fact that they were writing every day, not the content of what they were writing. After trust was built, there would be many times when students would ask me to go back and read a page they had folded earlier.

Journaling is such a powerful way for students to communicate with their teachers. I not only learned when a student didn't understand a concept I had taught so I knew I had to review it, but also when they had suffered a loss, or when their parents got divorced, or when they had spent the night at the hospital with a loved one, or how they felt about something that had happened at home, school, or in their community. I learned a million little things that I would have never thought to ask, but that gave insight into why a student may have been misbehaving in class or not engaged in learning. This insight allowed me to show empathy, which encouraged my students to keep showing up to class and opened the door for me to help them when they were ready.

I am reminded of a student who was involved in a hit-and-run accident as he was leaving school with his younger sisters. He was holding their hands as they crossed the street on a green light, when all three were struck by a car that ran through the red light and never stopped. One of his sisters died. We all knew about the accident—it was all over the news, but when he returned to school and turned in his journal, I learned that he felt responsible for his sister's death, that he was both sad and deeply angry that he had been unable to protect her. No one else knew this at the time, but with his permission, I was able to share this with his family so they could get him some counseling.

Music Listening

Passive Listening

There is always instrumental music playing in my classroom. The music creates a calming, relaxing, peaceful atmosphere, which is aided by the abundance of plants growing in the classroom. When people enter my computer lab for the first time, they immediately remark how peaceful the room feels. They love the plants and the soothing music, and some come back again and again just to take a break and breathe for a moment.

I must admit that in the beginning, I played the music for my sanity. It was a constant reminder to calm down when I felt students trying to take me to a place to which I didn't want to go. It also reminded me to focus on what was important, and not be distracted by the madness of middle school students. I never really thought my students were paying attention to the music, but then, I would notice students humming the music or adlibbing as they worked. Sometimes they even harmonized with the music, so I learned which students had beautiful singing voices. And sometimes when YouTube ads would hijack my playlist and not return to the music or I

would rush in late in the morning and not get a chance to turn it on, inevitably a student would ask, “What happened to the music?” I realized that the music was helping them as much as it was helping me, although some would never admit it.

Active Listening

For this curriculum unit, there will also be times when a music selection is played and students will be asked to listen while doing nothing else and observe how the music makes them feel—calm, sad, happy, etc. There will be several different ways that students will be asked to respond to the music including writing prose or poetry, drawing, or creating lyrics.

Digital Products

Create Photo Journal in Google Docs

Students will Create a Photo Journal in Google Docs

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-a-photo-journal-in-google-docs/overview.html>

This website provides video-based instruction that explains how to create a photo journal with hyperlinks. Students will be able to add to this journal throughout the semester as an ongoing assignment. In response to a music clip played in class, students will use text and images from the Internet to express how this music makes them feel. They must do their best to articulate how they feel using words, but also search for images that convey this feeling for them as well. In an extension of this project, students may also draw images in their physical journal that demonstrate how they feel when listening to this song.

Create Google Slides Presentation

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-a-presentation-all-about-a-topic/overview.html>

This assignment is nearly identical to the previous one, except that students will demonstrate proficiency in creating a Google Slides presentation, rather than a Google Docs presentation. The Google slides presentation will include text, images, animations, transitions, music clips and or/video clips.

Dialogue Coding Project

Students will create a coding project using SCRATCH on the CS First <https://csfirst.withgoogle.com/c/cs-first/en/dialogue/overview.html>

Using the “Dialogue” assignment on CS First, they will choose 2 characters (sprites) and program them to dialogue with each other. One sprite will share a hypothetical or real problem or concern they may have and the other sprite will offer them strategies to help them deal with that concern. The “helper” sprite should be using strategies that we have learned in class. Students will also be required to choose sound blocks to add music to their project. My students will have experience doing this, but for any students that are new to SCRATCH, the program on CS First provides step-by-step video instruction for how to complete a project in SCRATCH.

Create Personal Annotated Music Playlist Create Personal Annotated Music Playlist

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-an-annotated-playlist/overview.html>

Students will be asked to begin monitoring different types of music that they normally listen to and explore other types that may be unfamiliar to them. They will already be familiar with paying attention to how particular songs make them feel. Which songs take them to their happy place? Which songs identify a situation to which they can relate? Which songs allow them to express sadness? Which songs help them relax? Concentrate? They will then create their own personal playlist of songs with clean lyrics (or no lyrics), positive messages, and that can help them regulate their emotions. They must explain why each song was chosen, how each song makes them feel, etc. This music may reflect their culture since so many of them were not born in the United States.

If they can create a classroom approved playlist that actually helps them to remain calm, feel happy and focus on completing their assignments, I will consider allowing them to listen to their playlist while working on their projects. Since they always want to listen to music in my classroom, usually music that is inappropriate and that creates the opposite effect that I am trying to achieve (i.e. impromptu dance parties, loud singing, and no completion of work), this assignment may motivate me to meet them halfway. Their playlist should be appropriate enough to play out loud in the classroom, not just suitable for playing

through their headphones. This could allow me to “gift” my students the opportunity to choose whose playlist is played in class.

Reflective Discussion Group (Circle Time)

For this activity, students will bring their chairs and form a circle in the back of the room. There will be music playing in the background just as there is every day. Using a combination of the socio-emotional writing/discussion prompts in an activity box (I use the Grab & Write Socio-Emotional Prompts, Grades 3-5, Lakeshore) students will take turns responding to the prompts. (I could not find these prompts for older students but given the fact that these questions had not been addressed in earlier grades, I found that they were just right for my middle school students.) The other members of the classroom will also be able to respond to the same prompt if they choose to, thus creating a group discussion. After each group, students will be asked to journal to allow students the opportunity to write things they may have been unwilling or unable to share publicly. In a different version of this group activity, the teacher will ask a series of ACE-type questions and allow students to respond by show of hands if the statement is true for them.

Wishes Inventory

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1j-lbg9_LdA_6u_Gt4fHcwDTTqAfCYHdAW_uAfZiQ01w/edit?usp=sharing

This activity will be completed anonymously, but students will be given credit for participating. It will be completed near the end of the unit because students will need time to practice processing their own feelings before responding to this inventory of questions.

Choice Board

The final activity for this unit will be a choice board where students will choose which 2 projects they will complete. Students may complete more than two projects for extra credit.

1. Write the Lyrics for a Song
 - a. <https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/write-the-lyrics-for-a-song/overview.html>
 - b. Students will follow the directions on this Applied Digital Skills program to complete this activity step-by-step.
2. Write a rap or song or beat that helps you remember something like times tables, types of figurative language, or anything you are currently learning about. You may also take another song or beat and change the words for this assignment. This song can be recorded or performed in class for a grade.
 - a. <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/>

3. Listen to a song that helps you to feel calm and relaxed. Draw a picture while you are listening. Explain in a paragraph how music and drawing helps to calm you down. Students may also use Google Drawings to create a digital poster.
4. Create a comic strip that explains a positive way to handle a conflict, teaches strategies for calming down when upset, etc. Strategies could include journaling, listening to positive music, drawing, helping another person, etc.
5. Create a Google Slides Presentation that introduces or explains ACEs

Classroom Activities

Lesson 1—“What Are ACEs? What Can We Do About Them?”

Duration: 3-5 days (Note: Duration for these lessons will depend largely on how comfortable students are with creating digital artifacts. Additional time can be given to group discussions, independent journal writing, or music listening, if students finish early.)

Standards:

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

CC.1.4.7.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

CC1.5.7.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives:

Students will actively engage in a reflective group discussion by expressing their own thoughts and ideas clearly and listening while others are sharing.

Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, responses to music.

Students will create a digital photo journal that they will work on throughout the semester, adding one new entry each week.

Materials Needed:

Student Computers/Laptops

Headphones

Journal/Notebook/Pen/Pencil

What are ACEs? Handout

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VCICkw82hqBdEBkpUjtIcMlzO26cG4wW2LFNukzhfw/edit?usp=sharing>

Video Clips: We Can Prevent ACEs. <https://youtu.be/8gm-INpzU4g>

ACEs Primer (5 minutes) <https://vimeo.com/139998006>

Music Clip/Song (teacher's choice, different each week, to be played during journal writing)

Activities:

Video Clips (4:32) We Can Prevent ACEs. <https://youtu.be/8gm-INpzU4g>

ACEs Primer (5 minutes) <https://vimeo.com/139998006>

Teacher will introduce unit by introducing the concept of ACEs through the video clips. Teacher will also explain that we will be using music as a way to help us deal with ACEs. Students will be encouraged to begin to think about what types of music or songs help them when they are feeling sad or angry or happy.

Circle Time (15 minutes)—For this first group, students will respond to the video clips. The teacher will explain the norms for this activity, which will take place each day. Students will listen respectfully without interrupting while each person is sharing. Students may ask each other questions in response to what they have shared and they may share their own thoughts as well.

On other days, students may pull questions from a box of prompts or respond to questions posed by the teacher. The student who pulls the card from the box will speak first. Other students may respond, one at a time to the same prompt if they wish to do so. Each day, begin with different students until everyone has had a chance to respond. A student may choose not to respond to a particular prompt, but others in the group may choose to do so. That student may choose a different prompt or may pass altogether.

Journal (10 minutes)—Students will write reflectively about what the experience in the group was like, while instrumental music plays in the background. They may write about how they felt, things they wanted to say, or things they thought about while others were sharing. Basically, they can write whatever they choose to write, but it should be at least a paragraph. The goal will be to write in their journal every day, but they will need to turn in a minimum of 4 entries each week to be graded. Students may also write in their journals outside of class. Sometimes students may write something they do not want the teacher to read. The student will fold the page and the teacher will give credit for writing that day but will not read the entry (unless they are instructed to do so at a later time.) The writing

must use appropriate language and be authentic. The journal should be seen as a form of communicating with the teacher, not as simply an assignment. The teacher will respond and will grade based on the number of entries.

Create a Photo Journal in Google Docs

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-a-photo-journal-in-google-docs/overview.html>

This website provides video-based instruction that explains how to create a photo journal with hyperlinks. Students will watch the videos on their own computers, at their own pace. The link to the music clip will be included in the assignment in Google classroom so that they will be able to listen to the song while working. Students will be able to add to this journal throughout the semester as an ongoing assignment. In response to a music clip played in class, students will use text and images from the Internet to express how this music makes them feel. They must do their best to articulate how they feel using words, but also search for images that convey this feeling for them as well. Students should add the music clip to each entry as well. In an extension of this project, students may also draw images in their physical journal that demonstrate how they feel when listening to this particular song. Teacher will share a different song each week. Students will be required to add one entry to their photo journal each week. The photo journal will include a title page, table of contents (ongoing), and a one-page journal entry with title, music clip, text explaining how the music makes them feel, and images that express those feelings.

Lesson 2—“Music, Take Me to My Happy Place!”

Duration: 3-5 days

Standards:

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

ISTE Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

CC.1.4.7.U: Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

CC1.5.7.A: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-

one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives:

Students will actively engage in a reflective group discussion by expressing their own thoughts and ideas clearly and listening while others are sharing.

Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, responses to music.

Students will create a Google Slides Presentation that analyzes 5 songs that are meaningful to them.

Materials Needed:

Student Computers/Laptops

Headphones

Journal/Notebook/Pen/Pencil

Grab and Write Socio-Emotional Prompts

Music Clip/Song (teacher's choice to be played during journal writing)

Activities:

Circle Time (15 minutes) Remind students of the norms. Make sure a different set of students have an opportunity to pull a question from the box and that the same students do not monopolize the group.

Journal (10 minutes) Remind students that they will need to turn in a minimum of 4 entries by the end of the week.

Create Google Slides Presentation

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-a-presentation-all-about-a-topic/overview.html>

Students will choose 5 songs that are meaningful to them. They can be instrumental or have lyrics, but lyrics must be clean and positive. I will not listen to nor grade presentations with songs that are inappropriate. Each slide must include a link to the song, an image that represents the song for them, and an explanation of what this song means to them and how it helps them feel better. This presentation will have a total of seven (7) slides—title slide, 5 slides with songs, and a closing slide that summarizes what they are learning about the ability of music to change the way they feel, focus, or understand something about themselves. The Google slides presentation must include text, images, animations, transitions, music clips and or/video clips.

Photo Journal Entry: Students will add a new entry to their journal.

Lesson 3—My Friend Needs Help? What Do I Say to Them?

Duration: 3-5 days

Standards:

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

ISTE Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

CC.1.4.7.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

CC1.5.7.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives:

Students will actively engage in a reflective group discussion by expressing their own thoughts and ideas clearly and listening while others are sharing.

Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, responses to music.

Students will code a project using SCRATCH to have 2 characters (sprites) dialogue about effective problem-solving.

Materials Needed:

Student Computers/Laptops

Headphones

Journal/Notebook/Pen/Pencil

Grab and Write Socio-Emotional Prompts

Music Clip/Song (teacher's choice)

Activities:

Circle Time (15 minutes)

Journal Writing (10 minutes)

Dialogue Coding Project

Students will create a coding project using SCRATCH on the CS First <https://csfirst.withgoogle.com/c/cs-first/en/dialogue/overview.html>

Using the “Dialogue” assignment on CS First, they will choose 2 characters (sprites) and program them to dialogue with each other. One sprite will share a hypothetical or real problem or concern they may have, and the other sprite will offer them strategies to help them deal with that concern. The “helper” sprite should be using strategies that we have learned in class. Students will also be required to choose sound blocks to add music to their project. My students will have experience doing this, but for any students that are new to SCRATCH, the program on CS First provides step-by-step video instruction for how to complete a project in SCRATCH.

Photo Journal Entry

Lesson 4—“Creating My Very Own Annotated Music Playlist!”

Duration: 5 days

Standards:

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

ISTE Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

CC.1.4.7.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

CC1.5.7.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives:

Students will actively engage in a reflective group discussion by expressing their own thoughts and ideas clearly and listening while others are sharing.

Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, responses to music.

Students will create an annotated playlist of songs that are meaningful to them.

Materials Needed:

Student Computers/Laptops

Headphones

Journal/Notebook/Pen/Pencil

Grab and Write Socio-Emotional Prompts

Music Clip/Song (teacher's choice)

Activities:

Circle Time

Journal Writing

Create Personal Annotated Music Playlist Create Personal Annotated Music Playlist

<https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/create-an-annotated-playlist/overview.html>

Students will be asked to begin monitoring different types of music that they normally listen to and explore other types that may be unfamiliar to them. They will already be familiar with paying attention to how particular songs make them feel. Which songs take them to their happy place? Which songs identify a situation to which they can relate? Which songs allow them to express sadness? Which songs help them relax? Concentrate? They will then create their own personal playlist of songs with clean lyrics (or no lyrics), positive messages, and

that can help them regulate their emotions. They must explain why each song was chosen, how each song makes them feel, etc. This music may reflect their culture since so many of them were not born in the United States. If they can create a classroom approved playlist that actually helps them to remain calm, feel happy and focus on completing their assignments, I will consider allowing them to listen to their playlist while working on their projects. Since they always want to listen to music in my classroom, usually music that is inappropriate and that creates the opposite effect that I am trying to achieve (i.e., impromptu dance parties, loud singing, and no completion of work), this assignment may motivate me to meet them halfway. Their playlist should be appropriate enough to play out loud in the classroom, not just suitable for playing through their headphones. This could allow me to “gift” my students the opportunity to choose whose playlist is played in class.

Lesson 5—“What Have We Learned About ACEs, Social- Emotional Learning, and Music?”

Duration: 5 days

Standards:

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

ISTE Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

CC.1.4.7.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

CC1.5.7.A Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Objectives:

Students will actively engage in a reflective group discussion by expressing their own thoughts and ideas clearly and listening while others are sharing.

Students will journal their thoughts, feelings, responses to music.

Students will choose 2 activities from a choice board as a culminating activity for this unit.

Materials Needed:

Student Computers/Laptops

Headphones

Journal/Notebook/Pen/Pencil

Grab and Write Socio-Emotional Prompts

Music Clip/Song (teacher's choice)

Activities:

Journal Writing

Choice Board

The final activity for this unit will be a choice board where students will choose which 2 projects they will complete. Students may complete more than two projects for extra credit.

1. Write the Lyrics for a Song
 - i. <https://applieddigitalskills.withgoogle.com/c/middle-and-high-school/en/write-the-lyrics-for-a-song/overview.html>
 - ii. Students will follow the directions on this Applied Digital Skills program to complete this activity step-by-step.
2. Write a rap or song or beat that helps you remember something like times tables, types of figurative language, or anything you are currently learning about. You may also take another song or beat and change the words for this assignment. This song can be recorded or performed in class for a grade.
 - i. <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/>
3. Listen to a song that helps you to feel calm and relaxed. Draw a picture while you are listening. Explain in a paragraph how music and drawing helps to calm you down. Students may also use Google Drawings to create a digital poster.
4. Create a comic strip that explains a positive way to handle a conflict, teaches strategies for calming down when upset, etc. Strategies could include journaling, listening to positive music, drawing, helping another person, etc.
5. Create a Google Slides Presentation that introduces or explains ACEs.

Resources

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Annotated Bibliography:

6 Ways to Re-wire Your Brain

<https://www.healthline.com/health/rewiring-your-brain>

This article is a student-friendly article on ways to re-wire the brain and suggests that music is one of those ways.

“The Body Keeps the Score” [bodykeepsthescorept1.pdf](#)

This article explains the science of how trauma affects the brain and how the body stores the memory of the trauma even if there is no conscious memory. Excellent article!

Resilience Documentary

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/watch/resilience>

This is an excellent documentary on ACEs and how to build resilience.

Paper Tigers

<https://video-alexanderstreet-com.proxy.library.upenn.edu/watch/paper-tigers?context=channel:film-platform>

Also an excellent documentary about a high school that took a trauma-informed approach to dealing with their students and the great success they experienced.

ACEs Primer

<https://vimeo.com/139998006>

This is a 5-minute video that explains the ACEs study.

The Philadelphia ACE Project <https://www.philadelphiaaces.org/philadelphia-ace-survey>

This website provides information about the Philadelphia ACE Project.

RESILIENCE: The Biology of Stress and the Science of Hope - Film Screening and Discussion

[Resilience conversation](#)

CDC website

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

CDC information about ACEs, violence prevention, graphics, etc.

<https://www.pacesconnection.com/fileSendAction/fcType/0/fcOid/477711629925154911/filePointer/477852400358913477/fodoid/477852400358913467/Philadelphia%20Urban%20ACE%20Study.pdf>

Results of Philadelphia ACE Study

<https://www.edutopia.org/article/integrating-music-social-and-emotional-learning/>

I love this website! It has additional ideas for how to implement music and SEL into lessons.

<https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com/Song-Maker/>

You can make you own music!

<https://caldwellorganizedchaos.blogspot.com/2021/01/sel-focused-music-lessons.html>

These are additional SEL focused music lessons

ACE Graphics

What Are Adverse Childhood Experiences?

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/images/aces/What-Are-Adverse-Childhood-Experiences-medium.png?_=67651?noicon

Types of ACEs

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/images/aces/Types-of-ACEs-medium.png?_=49550?noicon

Many People Report ACEs

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/images/aces/Many-People-Report-ACEs-medium.png?_=67655?noicon

Some Groups Are More Likely

https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/images/aces/Some-Groups-Are-More-Likely-medium.png?_=67657?noicon

ACE Videos

We Can Prevent ACEs

<https://youtu.be/8gm-INpzU4g>

The Center for Child Counseling Fighting ACEs Toolkit Videos

<https://www.centerforchildcounseling.org/programs/fightingaces/acetoolkit/acesvideos/>

Appendix

Standards:

ISTE (*International Society for Technology in Education*) Standards

ISTE Standard 1: Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.

ISTE Standard 3: Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.

ISTE Standard 6: Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

ISTE Standard 7: Global Collaborator: Students use digital tools to broaden their perspectives and enrich their learning by collaborating with others and working effectively in teams locally and globally.

Business Computer, Information Technology Standards

15.4.8.G: Create an advanced digital project using appropriate software/application for an authentic task.

15.3.8.W: Use electronic communication with peers and/or educators to produce a work product.

English Language Arts

1.4 Writing

Technology and Publication

CC.1.4.7.U Use technology, including the Internet, to produce and publish writing and link to and cite sources as well as to interact and collaborate with others, including linking to and citing sources.

1.5 Speaking and Listening

Comprehension and Collaboration-Collaborative Discussion

CC1.5.7.A) Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Integration of Knowledge and Ideas Multimedia

CC.1.5.7.F Include multimedia components and visual displays in presentations to clarify claims and findings and emphasize salient points

Mental and Emotional Health Standards (6-8) (Optional)

<p>1. Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will comprehend concepts important for establishing and maintaining behaviors that promote mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>MEH1.2.1 Explain the importance of talking with parents and other trusted adults about feelings.</p> <p>MEH1.2.2 Identify appropriate ways to express and deal with feelings.</p> <p>MEH1.2.3 Explain the relationship between feelings and behavior.</p> <p>MEH1.2.8 Identify the benefits of healthy peer relationships.</p>
<p>2. Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on mental and emotional health behaviors.</p>	<p>MEH2.2.1 Identify relevant influences of family on mental and emotional health practices and behaviors.</p> <p>MEH2.2.2 Identify relevant influences of school on mental and emotional health practices and behaviors.</p> <p>MEH2.2.3 Identify relevant influences of media and technology on mental and emotional health practices and behaviors.</p>
<p>3. Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to establish and maintain behaviors that promote mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>MEH3.2.1 Identify trusted adults at home who can help promote mental and emotional health.</p> <p>MEH3.2.2 Identify trusted adults and professionals in school who can help promote mental and emotional health (e.g., school nurse, school counselor).</p> <p>MEH3.2.3 Identify trusted adults and professionals in the community who can help promote mental and emotional health (e.g., counselors, social workers, healthcare providers).</p>
<p>4. Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to use</p>	<p>MEH4.2.1 Demonstrate how to effectively communicate needs, wants, and feelings in healthy ways.</p> <p>MEH4.2.2 Demonstrate effective active listening skills including paying attention, and verbal and nonverbal</p>

<p>interpersonal communication skills to enhance mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>feedback.</p> <p>MEH4.2.3 Demonstrate effective refusal skills to avoid participating in emotionally unhealthy behaviors.</p> <p>MEH4.2.5 Describe how to effectively communicate care and concern for others.</p>
<p>5. Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to use decision making skills to promote mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>MEH5.2.1 Identify situations which need a decision related to mental and emotional health (e.g., dealing with interpersonal conflict, managing anger).</p> <p>MEH5.2.2 Describe how family, peers or media influence a decision related to mental and emotional health.</p>
<p>6. Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to set personal goals related to mental and emotional health, take steps to achieve these goals, and monitor their progress in achieving them.</p>	<p>MEH6.2.1 Identify a realistic personal short-term goal to improve or maintain positive mental and emotional health.</p> <p>MEH6.2.3 Identify people who can help achieve a goal to improve or maintain positive mental and emotional health.</p>
<p>7. Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to demonstrate strategies to improve or maintain positive mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>MEH7.2.1 Identify mental and emotional health practices that reduce or prevent health risks.</p>

<p>8. Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.</p> <p>After implementing this curriculum, students will be able to demonstrate the ability to influence and support others to improve mental and emotional health.</p>	<p>MEH8.2.1 Make requests to others to promote personal mental and emotional health practices.</p> <p>MEH8.2.2 Demonstrate how to encourage peers to make healthy mental and emotional health choices.</p>
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