

ABSTRACT

Title of Project

Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place Project

Authors

Edwin B. Wasiak and Kim Witko

Affiliation of the Authors

The University of Lethbridge

Mailing Address of the Authors

Faculty of Education
The University of Lethbridge
4401 University Dr.
Lethbridge, Alberta
Canada T1K 3M4

Email addresses:

edwin.wasiak@uleth.ca

kim.witko@uleth.ca

Project Description

Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place was a multidimensional project that included three components: 1. an innovative instructional unit; 2. an experimental concert; and 3. a research study.

The instructional unit was taught in the schools in regular music classes during the month of September 2002 and culminated with performances of *Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place* on October 1 and 2, 2002 (3 performances). Data was collected during and following the completion of the instructional unit and the concert.

In creating *Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place*, myths and legends of the Blackfoot people were used as narratives. Since they are the primary group of First Nations people in southern Alberta, Canada, their mythology is closest to this land. The underlying concept is the coming together (i.e. "meeting") of people from different cultures in a spirit of harmony and mutual respect.

This was a collaborative venture by the University of Lethbridge, the Lethbridge Symphony Association, and individuals from the Blackfoot community.

Goals of the Project

1. To explore innovative approaches to educational children's concerts.
2. To promote interest in attending 'live' concerts.
3. To promote a spirit of mutual respect among students of diverse heritages.

The Instructional Unit

The *Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place* concert was the central focus and culminating event of the unit. The aim of the unit was to enable students to make strong connections between the material and creative processes they have explored in their music classes and the music they experience at the concert. The unit was developed for use in regular music classes for students in grades 4, 5, and/or 6.

The Concert

The concert was a 'musical meeting place' of newly composed art music, with roots in western European traditions, and contemporary native-American music. The art music underscored the narration of the legends and provided a musical backdrop for the dancers, but made no attempt to be "quasi Blackfoot" music. Blackfoot singers performed their own music on the program. The concert also included newly created dance and visual projections to accompany the narration of traditional Blackfoot myths. In keeping with the underlying concept of *Itaohkanao'pi: The Meeting Place*, every effort was made to present both musical cultures positively and in a spirit of harmony and mutual respect.

Research Study

Purpose of the Research

The materials and approaches used in the instructional unit as well as the concept and content of the concert were experimental. The purpose of the research was to evaluate the overall effectiveness of these experiments.

The specific objectives of the research were:

1. To evaluate the effectiveness of the instructional unit in achieving the stated aim of enabling students to make strong connections between the material and creative processes they have explored in their music classes and the music they experience at the concert;
2. To evaluate the project's success in promoting interest in attending 'live' concerts;
3. To evaluate the project's success in promoting a spirit of mutual respect among students of diverse heritages;
4. To examine the experiences teachers and students have as participants to generate recommendations regarding the use of the "educational children's concert" as an enrichment activity in music education.

Subjects

The subjects consisted of a volunteer sample of those participating in the project, both teachers and students. The total number of participants was 16 teachers and 1360 students (grades 4-6) in 15 schools in southern Alberta, Canada.

Methodology

The study primarily employed qualitative methods, as well as video analysis and surveys. Data were collected in the following ways:

1. 'Extended unstructured' interviews.
2. On-site observations.
3. Documents and artifacts (surveys, journal reflections, assessment tools, video tape of lessons in progress and culminating projects).
4. Videotaped samples of students' reactions during the concert.
5. Literature review.

'Open coding' procedures (Strauss and Corbin, 1990) were used to analyze the qualitative data collected. Student response to the concert was verified by 3-way triangulation. The three sources of data are: 1. analysis of the videotape 2. student responses on the survey and 3. teacher observations. These findings were then combined with quantitative data collected from the surveys to derive conclusions.

Outcomes:

The research component was still in progress at the time of the writing of this abstract. Findings will be reported at the conference.