

Project-Based Learning and Development for Deep Musical Understanding

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A Sample Project Starting Point

Note: This is simply a framework for developing the start to a project. This is not a lesson plan.

Part I: Expressing Texas through music

Big idea: Music can be expressive

Enduring understanding: People can express ideas, experiences, or sensations through music

Sample essential/driving questions:

- How might music express or evoke a sense of place?
- What makes music expressive?
- Can people express the same thing with different music?
- Can the same music express different things?

Sample musical problems to solve and project prompt: (student prompt)

To whom it may concern,

Welcome to the “Reflecting on Texas” multimedia project team. We are excited about the potential of encouraging citizens of Texas and tourists to reflect on the landscape of the state and its relation to their sense of place from a wide range of perspectives. Your responsibility to the project is to work with a team and create music that is expressive and evocative of Texas. Your music will be included on an interactive multimedia website designed to foster reflection and dialogue related to the state. As a team member you have wide creative license in how you approach the project. The only parameters are as follows: [Insert your desired parameters i.e. Your entire team must perform the music live. You must record or notate your music in some fashion. You must provide an explanation of your process in the form of “artists’ notes,” etc.]

Provide time for students to engage in the project and address the essential questions

Part II: Connecting to historical, social, cultural, and musical contexts and issues:

Essential question: How have musicians expressed place through music?

Potential Examples:

Ferde Grofé: *Grand Canyon Suite*

John Luther Adams: *InukSuit*

Jay Z & Alicia Keys: *Empire State of Mind*

Steve Reich: *City Life*

Sample (smaller scale) musical problems to solve:

- Develop a list of questions you might ask these composers.
- Develop an interesting and engaging analysis of how a composer has expressed place through her/his music.
- Express a sense of place through a particular musical style or genre. Improvise! What questions might we ask about rap music and place?

Part III: Considering music and expression

Facilitate dialogue with students to address the original essential/driving questions.

Provide students with opportunities to share their perspectives in multiple forms.

- How did your music compare/contrast to music by others who also expressed place through sound?
- How might music express or evoke a sense of place?
- What makes music expressive?
- Can people express the same thing with different music?
- Can the same music express different things?

Reflecting on and synthesizing our experiences:

Provide students opportunities to demonstrate their understanding that:

- Big idea: Music can be expressive
- Enduring understanding: People can express ideas, experiences, or sensations through music

Provide students opportunities to demonstrate additional skills, knowledge, understanding, and dispositions related to the curriculum

Assessing students' learning through:

- Ongoing observations
- Ongoing questioning
- Students' written/video/oral reflections
- "Exit tickets"
- Checking for understanding throughout the project
- Teacher/Peer/Self Assessment of students' projects