Sing a Song of Sixpence

2014-2015 CCTL Grant Proposal

**Title:** Sing a Song of Sixpence: Using Song to Teach about Fluency Development

**Description of Project:** This project is designed to be implemented in my fall 2014 Language Arts Integration graduate education course. As future teachers of the language arts, one component of literacy my students will be required to teach is fluency. One method for doing so is integrating song into the curriculum. The National Reading Panel (NRP, 2000) determined that reading fluency is one of the foundations of effective reading instruction. Fluency is the bridge between word recognition and comprehension (Rasinski, 2012), and can lead to overall proficiency in reading (Benjamin & Schwanenflugel, 2010; Miller & Schwanenflugel, 2008). A growing body of research supports the notion that singing has the potential for improving reading and fluency (Hines, 2010; Biggs, Homan, Dedrick, & Rasinski, 2008). Singing, tracking lyrics, and the melody and rhythm of songs contributes to its effectiveness as a tool for developing fluency (Iwasaki, Rasinski, Yildirim, & Zimmerman, 2013). The intent of this project is to raise an awareness of the positive effects songs can have on learners. Participants will complete a survey about their feelings and experiences with singing and songs at the beginning of the semester. They will work with a different song each week throughout the semester and then complete a survey at the end of the semester.

**Goals of Project:** The goals of this project are threefold: 1) to actively engage preservice teachers in exploring the learning potential of songs; 2) to increase preservice teachers’ repertoire of various songs to use in the classroom and how to utilize them effectively; and 3) to increase preservice teachers’ confidence with using songs as a tool for developing fluency.

**Active Learning:** Active learning is integral to the design of this project. Each week, students will be introduced to a different song during the first ten minutes of class (see Appendix A). Lyrics will be
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provided in various formats (on the SmartBoard, handouts, song books, etc.). Learning components of the song, such as phrasing, rhyming, and vocabulary, will be discussed. We will sing the song multiple times, either at the beginning of class, during transitions, and/or at the end of class. As a class, we will explicitly discuss how the singing affected our fluency. Students will take turns choosing the songs and leading the discussion and singing throughout the semester. Educating our pre-service teachers about the use of songs as a tool for developing fluency may encourage them in to infuse this tool within their curriculum, which may ultimately help their students with reading.

Assessment techniques: Informal assessments will occur throughout the semester through the use of observations and conversations. In particular, I will be attending to students’ comments to see if active learning has affected their interest and confidence with using songs in the classroom. A formal assessment will be conducted using a survey, modified from Stickling, Prasun, and Olsen (2011) about feelings and experiences with songs (see Appendix B). Pre and post survey responses will be compared.

Advancing the Understanding of Active Learning at NU: This project will contribute to the active learning of students at Niagara University and the College of Education by providing an example of active learning with the tool of singing and songs to promote fluency. Additionally, if this project proves beneficial to my students, sustainability will occur through implementation in my future education courses.

Dissemination: The results of the project will be disseminated through appropriate conference venues, CCTL seminars, and/or scholarly publications.
References


Appendix A

Potential Song Titles

*Sing a Song of Sixpence*

*You Are My Sunshine*

*Do Your Ears Hang Low?*

*The Battle Hymn of the Republic*

*Row, Row, Row Your Boat*

*Amazing Grace*
Appendix B

Sing a Song of Sixpence Survey

Scale: 1 Very little/ Very negative
       2 Little/ Negative
       3 Neutral
       4 Often/ Positive
       5 Very often/ Very positive

1. How do you personally feel about singing?  1 2 3 4 5

2. How often do you feel singing should be used in the elementary classroom?  1 2 3 4 5

3. How comfortable would you feel using singing in the classroom?  1 2 3 4 5

4. How interested would you be in receiving ideas for using songs and singing in the classroom?  1 2 3 4 5

5. Do you feel singing is beneficial to students?  1 2 3 4 5

6. List some types of songs that you are familiar with:

7. Please share any additional thoughts about songs and singing as a tool in the classroom: