

**The Music is in the Mail –
a participatory action research of a new curriculum
Action Research Project Final Report**

Robert Abrams, Ph.D. and Marissa Caputo
For Mercy University EDSA 510,
Professor Matt Koopmans
12/21/2023



The curriculum was developed by Robert Abrams and Marissa Caputo. Robert Abrams designed the study. The lesson was taught by Marissa Caputo to her students.

INTRODUCTION.....	2
PRE-IMPLEMENTATION PREPARATION.....	2
DATA COLLECTION	2
INSTRUMENTS USED.....	3
STUDY PARTICIPANTS	3
ISSUE TO BE ADDRESSED BY THE STUDY.....	4
WHY THIS HISTORICAL DOCUMENT WAS CHOSEN	4
KNOWN RISKS IN THE STUDY.....	4
EXPECTED DATA ANALYSIS	5
WHAT WE EXPECTED TO LEARN FROM THE STUDY.....	5
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MUSIC IN THE MAIL LESSON.....	5
NUMBER OF STUDENTS, CLASSES AND GROUPS.....	5
THE CURRICULUM AS IMPLEMENTED.....	6
MUSIC IN THE MAIL LESSON RESOURCES	7
<i>Music in the Mail slide show.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Music in the Mail activity resources.....</i>	<i>11</i>
Music in the Mail activity folder	11
The postcard.....	12
Music in the Mail Activity Sheet	12
DATA ANALYSIS.....	15
<i>Questions asked.....</i>	<i>15</i>
1. What do you see in the postcard?.....	15
2. What does the music on the postcard sound like to you?	16
3. Write two things you discovered today.....	17
4. Why do you think this postcard was sent to us? Remember the different countries, music, and history of each part of the postcard.	17
5. Write one question you would like to ask about the postcard.....	18
<i>Ms. Caputo's classroom observation report.....</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>Overall assessment of the lesson by Ms. Caputo.....</i>	<i>19</i>
NEXT STEPS.....	20
ADDITIONAL ANALYSES	20
SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENSIONS OF THE CURRICULUM	20
SUGGESTIONS FOR EXTENSIONS OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	21
IMPLICATIONS OF THIS STUDY FOR THE DATA NEEDS OF THE SCHOOL	21
STATEMENT ABOUT HOW PROVIDING LESSONS SUCH AS THESE CONSTITUTE AN IMPROVEMENT TO THE CURRICULUM OFFERINGS OF THE SCHOOL	22
THE BROADER SIGNIFICANCE OF OUR FINDINGS TO THE FIELD	23
CONCLUSIONS.....	23

Introduction

This participatory action research project includes the development of a new music education lesson, an implementation of the new lesson and an evaluation of the new lesson. The evaluation is primarily for formative purposes.

The project is a collaboration between Robert Abrams (as the experienced researcher) and Marissa Caputo (as the experienced teacher).

This study did not involve the information or data needs of the school, beyond that needed for the new lesson that was developed. The study did involve the data needs of the participating researcher, in that he needed qualitative data to advance his applied understanding of qualitative research, needed data which would give him legitimacy in music contexts and needed to find a way to unstick and move forward in his own research practice. Progress has been made in all three. A future study could involve the information or data needs of the school in the future, since trust has now been established between Dr. Abrams and the school. Such a future study could focus only on the information or data needs of the music department, or could create a participatory action research study for the school's information and data needs more broadly.

This study does not involve any people other than the collaborating teacher, and obtaining the approval of the school principal, so the complexities of involving others in this study were low.

Pre-implementation preparation

Data collection

Data collection was planned to be carried out at one of the two schools at which Ms. Caputo teaches in New York State. Ms. Caputo teaches the full range of ages in her elementary school through Grade 5. She teaches general education, inclusion and Adverse Childhood Experiences students, among others.

The school was chosen because the principal at this school has been very supportive in the past for new initiatives. In this sense, the selection of the school is a convenience sample, but since the goal is to test the new lesson for formative purposes, and is not intended to generate generalizable data, a convenience sample is appropriate. Also, to some extent, a convenience sample is inherent in action research, where teachers conduct studies at their own schools.

While the new lesson is intended to be adaptable to any elementary school students, we decided to limit the initial tests to Grade 4 and 5 classes because older students can handle more complex information, which makes the lesson design easier. The lesson only includes one postcard, but there is a lot of information packed into it.

In the end, due to scheduling constraints, one Grade 4 general education class and one Grade 5 inclusion class was chosen to test the new lesson. The plan is to test the lesson with additional students later, but the initial data collection was planned to be (and was) limited to these two classes.

The lesson was planned to take most of one class period, and did not include a homework component, nor did it include any pre- or post- surveys. The lesson did successfully fit into one class period. We had originally intended to include a homework assignment, but in the end did not to keep the new lesson simpler.

No names or other personally identifiable information were retained in the data used for analysis. Student group names do need to be written on the activity sheets so Ms. Caputo can follow up with students for instructional purposes later on, but again, these were not retained in the data recorded for analysis purposes.

Instruments used

The data collection instrument consisted of the activity worksheet developed for the new lesson. This worksheet had five questions which the students will write on the paper. As implemented, the worksheet was completed by small groups of students. The same worksheet could also be completed by individual students, if a teacher wanted to use it that way. Because we wanted to encourage discussions among students, and we only wanted the lesson to take one class period, we decided to use a group data collection approach.

The questions were:

1. What do you see in the postcard?
2. What does the music on the postcard sound like to you?
3. Write two things you discovered today.
4. Why do you think this postcard was sent to us? Remember the different countries, music, and history of each part of the postcard.
5. Write one question you would like to ask about the postcard.

These questions went through several rounds of revision. Our goal was to use language the students would easily understand, and which fit with the expectation that the students would respond best with a certain amount of structure and scaffolding in the lesson.

Study participants

As partly discussed above, the study participants were planned to be, and were, two classes of students at one of the two schools at which Ms. Caputo teaches. In the end, there were two classes with 16 students each (32 students total), who formed nine groups of students. One class was Grade 4 general education and the other class was Grade 5 inclusion.

As of publication, official school or district demographics were not available.

Issue to be addressed by the study

The main narrow issue to be addressed by the study was to see whether an Autographed Musical Quotation postcard from the Undivided Back Postcard Period (1898 to 1907) can be used to teach music in an elementary school.

The main broad issue to be addressed was to see whether an Autographed Musical Quotation can be used to support cross-cultural conversations among elementary students. We didn't necessarily expect this broad goal to be addressed directly in the first implementation of the lesson, since it is a complex concept. We designed the lesson to address this goal by implication in the reference to multiple countries. Where students might not know what "cross-cultural" means, or might not know without time spent explaining the concept, the phrase "international conversations" is proposed as an alternative.

Why this historical document was chosen

Dr. Abrams has an extensive collection of Autographed Musical Quotations (AMQs), some of which were written on postcards. An Autographed Musical Quotation is a document that includes, ideally, a signature of a musician or composer, a date and a few bars of musical notation that is characteristic of the musician's work. After reviewing some of these, Ms. Caputo was attracted to the AMQs of Cuban musicians, because she has many students from various countries in Latin America. Dr. Abrams then chose the postcard that we internally refer to as Cuban 36 (a previous collector had numbered it 36 in a set, and it is from Cuba) because this AMQ was complete in terms of the ideal elements of an AMQ.

As it happens, the image on the postcard is not Cuban, but rather is German. The music written on the postcard was Cuban in the sense that it was written by a Cuban composer, but was written in a Polish musical style. While not ideal if the goal was to only talk about Cuban music, this worked to support our goals because this one postcard incorporated multiple cultures into one document. It is also somewhat typical for a postcard from 1902, given postal and cultural trends at the time, but that is not something we expected to get into with this initial lesson.

Known risks in the study

The only known risk in this study is the inclusion of an image from an opera by Richard Wagner. There are some people who have negative associations with Wagner's music, particularly in the state of Israel, because Wagner became a favored composer of the National Socialists in Germany. Wagner composed Lohengrin in 1850 and the postcard was sent in 1902, both of which pre-date the rise of the Nazis to power in 1933, so neither Wagner nor the postcard have any direct association with the Holocaust. We did not and do not anticipate any problems, but should objections arise, we believe we have a defensible position, and that part of the purpose of art is to help people process the difficult parts of human history. If needed, we have other Cuban postcards featuring images from other operas we can use in future lessons.

Expected data analysis

The answers written on the activity sheets will be, and were, typed into a spreadsheet. A variety of exploratory analysis, of a mostly qualitative nature, will be conducted. Since we didn't know quite what to expect the students will write, and since there are no wrong answers to the questions, we could not predict in advance what analyses would be conducted, except to say that some of the analysis would be categorization. Analysis as actually completed is reported below.

What we expected to learn from the study

We expected to learn whether students respond positively or negatively to the new lesson. This will be seen largely from classroom observations of the lesson, and by Ms. Caputo asking her students about it at the end of each class period.

We expected to learn what students can observe in an unique historical document, how students can translate music into text description, recall of facts presented during the lesson and inferences students can make from the facts and discussion. Perhaps most importantly, we expect to learn what questions students have about this historical document and the associated music after participating in the lesson.

All of this data, gathered on the activity sheet, will help inform future development of the lesson. It will also help Ms. Caputo know more about her students so she can adjust her teaching as needed for other parts of her instruction for those students.

The data gathered will form a baseline against which future implementations of this new lesson and other new lessons like it can be judged.

Part of the expected outcomes of the study will be possible next steps in music education lesson development and teaching.

Implementation of the Music in the Mail lesson

Number of students, classes and groups

Two classes of 16 students each participated in the study. One class was a 5th grade inclusion class and the other was a 4th grade general education class. Both classes had a mix of boys and girls. Other than unstructured observation of the classes, no demographic data was collected.

The student data consisted of responses to five questions on an activity sheet. The activity sheet was completed at the group level, with one activity sheet per group. There were four groups in the 5th grade class and five groups in the 4th grade class. The groups were assigned by the teacher, Ms. Caputo. For the 5th grade groups, each group chose a scribe to record the group's answers. For the 4th grade groups, the teacher chose the scribe for each group. The change in scribe selection was prompted by Ms. Caputo observing that letting the groups in the 5th grade group select their own scribes led to conflict that took time

away from the core of the lesson, so we decided to try teacher selection of scribes in the next class.

The curriculum as implemented

After Ms. Caputo's standard "Sing Hello!" activity, in which the students sing a hello song, naming each student and Ms. Caputo, Ms. Caputo introduced the Music in the Mail activity.

The lesson was framed as a story, in which the students in the class had received a postcard in 2023, that was mailed to them in 1902. The postcard took 121 years to get to the students, so it must be important.

Ms. Caputo showed the students a series of slides, which are shown below.

Then the students were divided into small groups. Each group was given a folder with a reproduction of the postcard, a hint sheet and an activity sheet. One student was the scribe for the group. (In the first class, the students chose the scribe for each group. In the second class, Ms. Caputo chose the scribe, since having the students choose their own scribes took too long.)

The three resources in the folder are shown below, after the slides. The front of the folder is also shown. (Note: there are earlier versions of the resources that are available on request.)

As a clarification, based on questions during the presentation of the study in class, the entire class was given one postcard to share, with a copy of the same postcard given to each group, and the same music was played for the entire class. Individual students or student groups could have been given different postcards with which to work, and one of our original ideas was to use a stations format for the class, but we decided for this initial implementation that one postcard would keep the activity and the classroom management simpler. We simplified the activity several times in the development process. The postcards and other resources were provided on paper to the students, but they could be provided on devices if desired. The only device used in the lesson as implemented was the TV or large computer screen the teacher used to display slides and videos – and the piano, if that counts as a device. A recording of the music on the postcard is available if a piano is not available. The fellow student who asked the questions felt that Arts and Music are slowly being phased out of our schools, and thought that both can be beneficial for students academically, as well as helping them to find and develop unknown or unexplored skills and passions. We whole-heartedly agree. Finding evidence for the effect of Autographed Musical Quotation postcards on students' academic progress, skill enhancement and passion discovery will take further study.

Music in the Mail lesson resources

Music in the Mail slide show

 **Welcome!** 

Today we will:
Sing Hello!

Look at a postcard that was mailed in 1902.
Discuss a new composer, new musical style, and Cuban music.

Here is the postcard we received in the mail.

What do you see?



Presentation notes: Today we will be investigating this interesting postcard that has come in the mail. It was mailed in 1902. What do you see?

Richard Wagner

Lohengrin
Opera



Presentation notes: German composer, actually was the only one of his siblings who did not start piano lessons at a very young age. He started piano lessons at age 13. Big dog lover, owned a newfoundland named Robber.

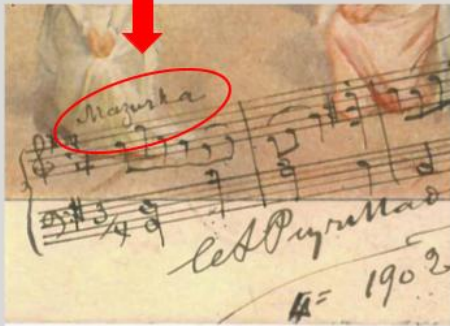
Lohengrin Opera Richard Wagner

Picture from our postcard
shows a scene from this
opera.

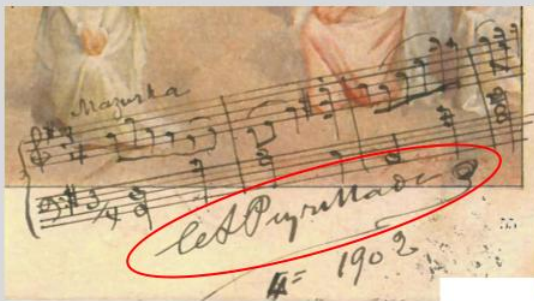


Presentation notes: Lohengrin tells the story of a knight sent in a boat pulled by swans to rescue a maiden who can never know his true identity.
(Note: The image of the conductor is a clickable video of a segment from Lohengrin, which was played for the class.)

Mazurka - a lively Polish dance.



(Note: The image of the dancers is a clickable video of a segment from a Mazurka dance performance with Mazurka music, which was played for the class.)

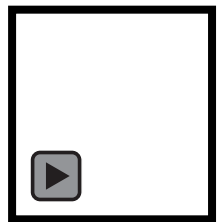


Eduardo Les Peyrellade
(1846-1930)
Cuban musician & pianist.



Eduardo Les Peyrellade

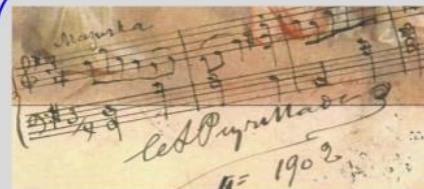
What does the music on the postcard sound like to you?



(Note: The music notation on the postcard was transcribed by Anuj Bhutani, a contemporary composer.)

Let's see what **YOU** can discover!

Wagner = German
composer, opera.



Cuban musician and
pianist.

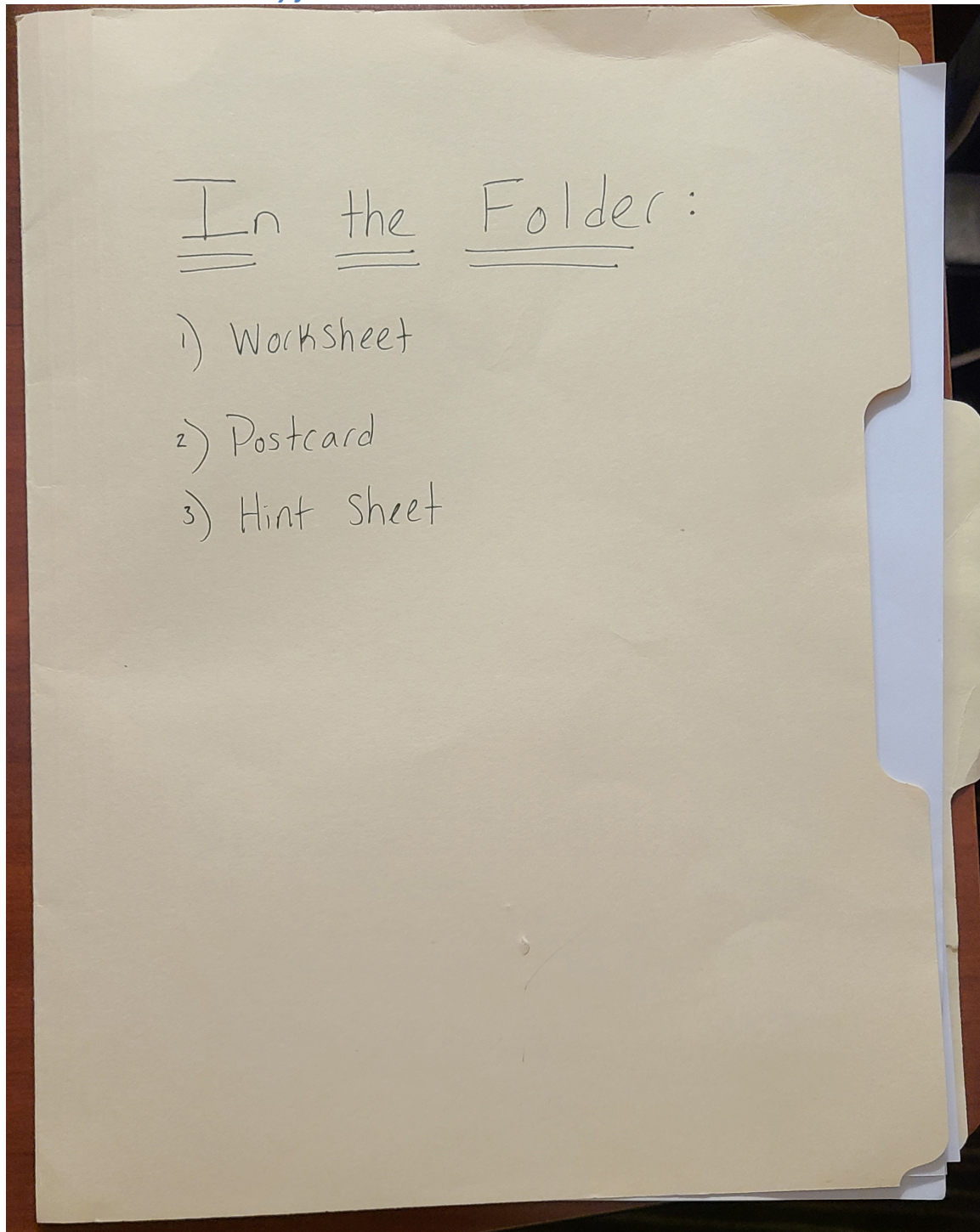
Mazurka = lively
Polish dance.



Presentation notes: We have discussed three very different things we find in this postcard. In your groups, think of questions that you have that relate to music, history, and countries/places.

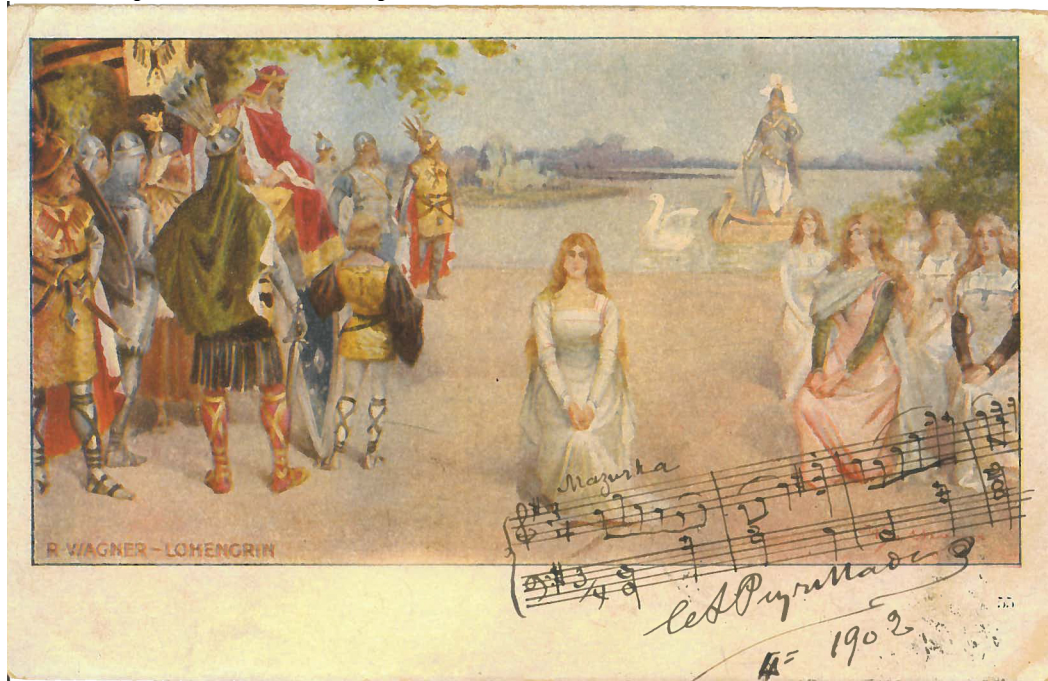
Music in the Mail activity resources

Music in the Mail activity folder



The postcard

Images of the front and back of the postcard were printed out, and then taped together to form a reproduction of the postcard.



Music in the Mail Activity Sheet

Note: The AMQ was played on the piano by the teacher for the students. We also used the piano because Ms. Caputo often plays music for her students on the piano. If the lesson were to be taught without a piano, a recording of the AMQ is available.

Group Name: _____

The Music in Your Mailbox

Take a look at the postcard we received. In your group, you will answer questions about music, history, and countries based on the postcard from 1902.



Mazurka = a lively Polish dance style.

Richard Wagner = German composer who wrote the opera pictured on the postcard.

Les Peyrellade = Cuban musician who wrote the music printed on the postcard.

In your group, answer the follow questions:

1. What do you see in the postcard?

2. What does the music on the postcard sound like to you?

3. Write two things you discovered today.

4. Why do you think this postcard was sent to us? Remember the different countries, music, and history of each part of the postcard.

5. Write one question you would like to ask about the postcard.

Data analysis

Questions asked

1. What do you see in the postcard?

Considering both classes together and correcting a few spelling errors, the students saw:
Things seen, in alphabetical order (number of instances if more than 1)

- A beach
- A girl sitting in a chair
- A girl who is going to sing for the king
- A knight (3)
- A knight coming to a village looking for a pretty girl
- A wedding
- A woman
- It looks like a wedding with two kings
- It's at the beach
- Lots of music
- Music
- Music notes (4)
- Old (From context, this refers to the age of the postcard)
- People (2)
- People gathered
- The card looks old
- Two kings

Note: If students wrote a complex statement, or wrote the same word multiple times but in ways that were conceptually different, these could be counted more than once. The goal here is not so much to find what items were seen most, as to find what items were seen. This will allow teachers to adjust instruction as needed, both to help students expand on what they see (for instance, no students wrote about the back of the postcard), and to focus in more depth on items students did see (for instance, is the scene a wedding? Depending on the focus of instruction, it may or may not matter whether the scene in the opera is actually a wedding.). If there were more students in a similar study, counting responses would make more sense than it did for this study.

During the whole class discussion, students made additional observations about the postcard, such as that they thought it depicted a party, or was an invitation to the students to attend a party. The latter kind of observation is especially valuable because it is actionable in a way that gives music, including music that is older than the students (but which was new when it was written), real world relevance. For instance, a musical quotation of a Mazurka by itself is interesting, but a 1902 Mazurka that invites students to a party invites the students to participate in and with the music, as background music to set a mood, or as a dance to learn and perform, among other options.

2. What does the music on the postcard sound like to you?

Considering both classes together and correcting a few spelling errors, the students described the music on the postcard as:

Things heard, in alphabetical order, with some grouping by concept (number of instances if more than 1)

A choir
A luluby
Calm (2)
Calming
A calm sound.
Disney
It sounds smooth. Its like smooth jazz.
Loud
Quiet
Relaxed
Relaxing (2)
Someone is coming back from a trip
Very peaceful

The general consensus was that the Mazurka musical quotation on the postcard was calm, relaxed and peaceful. These are stationary characteristics of the music. These concepts were also expressed by the students in active forms, such as calming and relaxing. The first is a characteristic of the music, while the second is an impact of the music on people. The difference between stationary (or passive) and active forms of the same concept could be explored in a lesson extension. Students may have heard the music quotation as calm because of the way that Ms. Caputo played it on the piano. The Mazurka in the video clip sounded quite different. It might be possible to play the musical quotation in a different manner, and then have students talk about these differences.

The connection between a Cuban Mazurka from 1902 with smooth jazz is a genuine high level insight. This is like panning for gold and finding a large gold nugget. This one insight alone means the Music in the Mail curriculum can be placed in the victory column.

The postcard image can be interpreted as someone coming back from a trip. What does it mean that the music quotation "sounds like someone is coming back from a trip"? This would be an interesting idea from which to continue the class discussion.

One group connected the musical quotation to Disney music. It is not clear from the data why they did. This does, though, show how students made a connection from music from 1902 to their own cultural context. This connection could be discussed in more depth in a lesson extension.

One group wrote that the music was loud, while another group wrote that the music was quiet. How can the same music be both loud and quiet? It is possible that the "loud" comment was in response to the Mazurka in the video clip, while the "quiet" referred to the Mazurka as played by Ms. Caputo. If it is, the activity needs to be adjusted to emphasize that

we want a response to the postcard and not to the video clip. Or the activity could be expanded to ask the same question of all of the music played – although for some students this might be too much, and easily could cause the lesson to not fit into one class period.

3. Write two things you discovered today.

Considering both classes together and correcting a few spelling errors, the students discovered:

Things discovered, in alphabetical order (verbatim statements, to show students' ability to construct sentences)

A card was delivered in 1902. It has music.

I discovered Murzurka, and Wagner.

One thing that we learned is that Peyrellade wrote a song. Another thing that we learned is one guy made magura song and other guy changed it to a polar dance.

Richard Wagner writes music.

That Eduardo Les Peyrellade is from Cuba and he made a song.

The note and music is like calm music.

Two things we discovered were Richard Wagner is from Germany and he's from Cuban.

Wagner was from Germany. The postcard was from 1902.

We discovered is that it looks old.

Note: To what extent are we as curriculum designers and instructors satisfied with what the students discovered and how they wrote the sentences about what they discovered? If we want the students to go further, either with discovery or writing, how can we support these in future lesson extensions?

4. Why do you think this postcard was sent to us? Remember the different countries, music, and history of each part of the postcard.

Considering both classes together and correcting a few spelling errors, the students thought:

Things reported, in alphabetical order

Because our composer of the month.

Because we can get an idea of the types of music from different countries.

To invite us to the opera.

To learn about music in Cuba and Germany.

To show us the music he made.

We think we got invited to a music festival.

There was also one non-response.

The students connected the postcard to regular classroom instruction (composer of the month). They understood the core idea of the lesson (to bring international or cross-cultural understanding or learning). They saw the postcard as an invitation, which wasn't something we intended, but which provides a way to extend the lesson that has a lot of potential (take the students to an opera or music festival, show an opera on a TV or computer if a field trip is not feasible, or have the students stage their own opera, music festival or party with music).

5. Write one question you would like to ask about the postcard.

Considering both classes together and correcting a few spelling errors, the students thought:

Questions asked, in alphabetical order

- Is the man dead or death?
- What is the party for?
- What was the name of the girl?
- Who sent it?
- Why are people gathered together?
- Why were the people on the postcard there?

Three groups did not respond to this question, either because they simply didn't answer it or perhaps because they ran out of time in the class period. In some ways, this question is the most important of the five questions, so we might want to consider how to make sure students attempt it.

Most of the questions asked by the students related to the picture on the postcard. One question related to the postal process of the postcard: who sent the postcard, which, because of the nature of undivided back postcards can be guessed but can't be precisely known. No questions were asked about the music.

Ms. Caputo's classroom observation report

Overview

Today was the first lesson using an Autographed Musical Quotation (AMQ) to start conversations in the music classroom. The activity was done twice, once with an inclusion 5th grade class and once with 4th grade GenEd. Both groups of students were interested in the activity and a few students even admitted they felt they learned something new today.

5th Grade Inclusion

- One student immediately noticed the Cuban flag and shared some facts about the country.
- Students looked at the postcard on the board and noticed things like the people, the 'lady' in the water, music notes, old cursive writing, the date (1902), and the stamps.

- During discussions of Wagner and the Mazurka style, this group would have benefited from smaller bits of information, but more specific.
- When looking at the actual music quotation, students were able to identify that this was from a Cuban musician.
 - When I do this activity again, I will focus more on specifics like pointing out the differences between countries (Germany, Poland, and Cuba) to generate responses more related to culture.
- During the written activity, students worked well in their groups but the climate of this class created some tension. The students were not quick to fill out the activity worksheet and their responses were sparse.
 - When I do this again, I will be sure to remind students to write in complete sentences and to generate more abstract ideas, not copying what is written on the board.

4th Grade GenEd

- Much of the student responses were the same as the 5th grade. The postcard looks very old, there is a 'girl' on a boat in the water, and there are music notes.
- Something I did differently that worked better, in my opinion, was playing the AMQ for students on piano directly after their listening to the opera by Wagner.
 - This allowed students to make connections and realize that the music on the postcard is not taken from the opera.
- During the activity, this class was actively engaged with answering the questions. They used complete sentences and came up with more original ideas than the other group.

Overall assessment of the lesson by Ms. Caputo

Throughout the planning process, Dr. Abrams and I modified the lesson and activity so that it could be most accessible to my students. We decided to implement the lesson in a General Education 4th grade class and an Inclusion 5th grade class. While the class labels are different, the overall population of students in the school perform below grade level. I anticipated that the lesson would flow and keep students engaged. They are used to similar activities like composer of the month and exploring musics of the world. The classes we selected for the lesson and activity are a talkative group, but that actually worked in our favor during the lesson. I was pleasantly surprised at the level of excitement students had after looking at the postcard.

Overall, the lesson was more successful than I anticipated in terms of student behavior, engagement and interest. The nature of these groups and their chatting was helpful in starting conversations about the AMQ and the postcard. Considering the information packed into this lesson, I think it would serve students well to split this into two sessions to create more of a unit format with the AMQs. The responses from my students were lacking in creativity and critical thinking, but Dr. Abrams and I can work together to design the activity to encourage more abstract thought.

Next steps

Additional analyses

We could look at facts recalled correctly, new insights, themes and non-responses.

This study was rooted in developing curriculum around a specific historical document, so other than one article critique of Laidlaw, J. (2022). An Action Research Study to Enhance a Music Teacher's Creative Pedagogies with Children. *Canadian Journal of Action Research*, 22(2), 72-90., and identification of other articles for possible review on the topics of {"Ethnographic Conversation"} and {"Music Education" "Action Research"}, no other literature review was conducted. This article critique and literature identification is available in a separate document. For future research, one next topic for literature review, revealed by this current study, would be on "applications of productive struggle in music education" – in terms of search, would likely be {"productive struggle" "music education"}.

Suggestions for extensions of the curriculum

Some suggestions for lesson extensions are embedded in analysis sections above. We could pull those together into a separate section as needed.

A few more lesson extensions are below.

A homework assignment

A homework assignment could be added to the lesson. The homework could be based on some of these lesson extensions. Students could be given several options for homework, so they can choose something that excites them (which needs to be balanced with providing enough structure so that students do in fact choose and complete an option).

Make playlists

Write a list of songs you would want to play at a party.

Advanced: Specify what kind of party it will be, and then ask someone else to list some songs they would want to play at a party.

Be a master question-maker.

Look at the postcard and the hint sheet.

Write as many questions as you can.

Just write them. Don't filter anything out. Don't worry about if they are good questions or serious questions. This is brainstorming.

However many questions you can come up with is a win.

Then, on a different day, go back to your list of questions and try to add a few more.

Repeat.

Can you get to 10 questions?

20 questions?

50 questions?

100 questions?
1,000 questions?
10,000 questions?

How many questions do you need to ask to be a master question-maker?

10,000 questions sounds like a lot, but remember that if you can write one question, the second question is just one question: you have already shown you can write one question, so writing the second question is something you already can do. The third question is just one question. The 100th question is just one question. Every question to the 10,000th question is just one question.

To frame this approach to mastery another way, the word "mile" comes from the Latin phrase "Mille passus" which means "One thousand steps or strides". Some have said, "A journey of one thousand miles begins with a single step." Thus, since a mile can be understood as 1,000 steps (of 5.28 feet each), a journey of 1,000 miles would be 1 million steps. This would be a little overwhelming for elementary school students, or for anyone else except perhaps ultra-marathoners. Instead, let us keep it to a manageable, but still real, challenge: "A journey of ten miles begins with a single step." Ten miles is 10,000 steps, which is enough repetitions to achieve mastery. The literal distance could be adjusted to account for the stride length of the students undertaking the journey, which could bring in teaching about the history of measurement units.

Make your own postcards to start international conversations with musicians

Students could make their own postcards, in the style of undivided back postcards. They could send them to professional musicians and ask those musicians to send a postcard back. This could start international conversations, and which could help students appreciate the benefits of slow time, in contrast to email and texting.

Student performance of the musical quotation

Students could try playing the musical quotation themselves.

Suggestions for extensions of the research methodology

More students. More postcards.

More grade levels. More schools.

Pre- and post- surveys.

Qualitative data analysis software.

A quantitative data analysis component.

Analysis by sub-groups, if there are at least 20 students per sub-group.

Implications of this study for the data needs of the school

Now that the study is complete, the potential implications of the study for the information and data needs of the school can be considered.

The students in the study come from a population where a certain amount of challenge can be assumed. On the other hand, having seen the students learn, it is reasonable to say that

these students have capabilities and potential to achieve beyond those challenges, expectations and assumptions.

The study presents at least one way to measure this learning: the number and quality of questions students can ask, with questions counted both individually and collectively. The data from the study provides a baseline. We are now in a better position to ask the schools' teachers, students, administrators and parents: What is a reasonable number of questions for a student, or a group of students, to be able to ask?, and, What is an unreasonably high number of questions for a student, or a group of students, to be able to ask, so they can prove everyone wrong?

To achieve Unreasonably High Learning (UHL), I feel we need three concepts: Mastery Learning (ML), Student Choice (SC), and Long Journeys Begin with a Single Step (LJBwSS).

Mastery Learning is needed because students need to have the time, fast or slow, they need to reach their goals, especially since these are goals that are not linked to any standardized test.

Student Choice is needed because each student is likely to find something in the Music in the Mail curriculum that motivates them, but each student does not have to be motivated by nor pursue everything in the curriculum to a mastery level. We, as educators, also do not need every student to achieve mastery in every aspect of the curriculum.

Long Journeys Begin with a Single Step is needed because long journeys may dis-motivate students. On the other hand, a single step is easy, as is each single step after that. (See above for the origin of the word "mile".)

Through the experience of trying the new lesson at the school, and its success, this study has helped build trust between the school and Dr. Abrams. Questions about the school's data and information needs can now be asked, whereas before they could not, or could not have been asked as easily. This could apply to any of the school's data and information needs, not just limited to music education data and information needs.

Statement about how providing lessons such as these constitute an improvement to the curriculum offerings of the school

Before the implementation of The Music is in the Mail, the school had never taught a lesson about Undivided Back Postcards, never taught a lesson about Autographed Musical Quotations and had never taught a lesson about the Cuban postal system in 1902 (or at least we are fairly certain of these), and certainly never taught a lesson so obscure as to incorporate all three.

The lesson was an improvement to the curriculum offerings of the school also in that the school now has another option for reaching and inspiring students.

In terms of current curriculum, students are not really provided with the opportunity to explore as much as Ms. Caputo thinks they should. With our idea for this curriculum

project, we can teach the necessary curricular concept imposed by standards and the district music department, but in a more creative and abstract way. The school's students need lots of practice with critical thinking skills and problem solving, for which this curriculum can provide an open space.

Ms. Caputo thinks our idea is genuine and unique. She thinks bringing history and other music concepts to students through the use of these documents can create a whole curriculum (method book type) that elementary school teachers need.

The broader significance of our findings to the field

Until one of the students in the study pointed it out, no one, to the best of our knowledge, had ever connected Cuban Mazurkas with Smooth Jazz. One original and unexpected insight is, by itself, a significant and meaningful contribution to the fields of music and music education. It is meaningful because it can be acted upon to create new curriculum extensions. For instance, now we have to start looking for Smooth Jazz Autographed Musical Quotation postcards.

Considering one of The School's initiatives, this lesson falls under the category of "productive struggle". Students were actively engaged with information they learned during the lesson when they were split into small groups to discover on their own. Productive struggle in the music classroom allows students to express themselves and doing so with multiple cultural influences allows for more student participation.

Conclusions

As the first implementation of this lesson and activity, it can be considered a success. Students worked in their groups well, and answered the questions on the activity sheet based on their own cultural background and influences. Students looking at the picture on the postcard described the scene as a party and later, they came to the conclusion that this postcard could be an invitation to a party. Another interesting response from students was that the music reminded them of Disney music. While there was no further explanation as to why, this proves that the implementation of the AMQ lesson and activity sparked cultural thought and relevance to their current lives in the music classroom. As we work to develop this curriculum, it is important to note that questions need to be tailored to encourage longer responses with more abstract ideas and explanations of student findings.

Moving forward, extensions for the lessons and activities might include a homework component, a composition component, and a performance component. Having students actively participating physically in the music portion of the analysis of these documents will generate more inquiry and lead to more abstract ideas and critical thinking about the cross-cultural references.

We feel we are ready to test this lesson, and other lessons like it, with more students at multiple schools, as well as to ask for feedback from professional musicians.