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Through the Eyes of Children: Telling Insights into Music Experiences

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Abstract

Seeing music education through the eyes of children leads to developing deepened conceptualizations of children's daily musical lives, both in- and out-of-school. By thoughtfully attending to children's perspectives and experiences, children become central informants to the life of elementary school music curricula. Various literature speaks to the relevance of this critical topic and examines various influences on children's musical perspectives such as community context, digital media, and popular culture. A narrative is offered detailing a two-phase, three-month study guided by the research questions: 1) How do children experience music in their daily lives? and 2) How do children's musical experiences in their daily lives interplay with their in-school music experiences? The narrative uncovers telling sentiments shared by a group of Grade 2/3 children regarding their musical lives. Conversations revealed pose wonderings for the relevance of elementary music curricula to children's daily music experiences.

Inquiring into the music experiences of children and giving voice to their perspectives fuels understanding of children's music-making processes in their daily lives. Integrating children's perspectives into the music education discourse is a means for music educators to consider the essentiality of honouring children's experiences in all aspects of music curricula. In support of this, the research and writings of Campbell (1998; 2010), Stauffer (2002), Reimer (2003), Buller Peters (2004), Smithrim and Uptis (2004), Zenker (2004), Barrett (2005), Green (2005), Woodford (2005), Barrett and Smigiel (2007), Campbell and Lum (2007), Lum and Campbell (2007), Barrett and Stauffer (2009), and Clandinin (2009), advocate a deepened desire to understand student perspectives by attending to the musical lives of children.

Throughout this article, I address the matter of attending to children's music perspectives by revealing literature that resonates within the discourse of music education, relevant to the music experiences of children. To mirror this, I share a narrative (Griffin, 2007) that brings to light the topic of honouring children's music perspectives in their daily lives. Inquiring into the narrative offers insights into understanding the necessity of embedding children's sentiments within elementary music curricula. Conclusions and continued inquiries emerge that propel ongoing conversation within elementary music education.

Literature Resonances

Elucidating the topic of honouring children's music perspectives leads to advocating for the reconceptualization of school music curricula. In reference to this, Economidou Stavrou (2006) vowed that, "What is non-negotiable nowadays is the

inclusion of children's values, needs and preferences in the curriculum" (p. 201).

Educators should view children as makers and negotiators of curriculum as opposed to consumers. Lum and Campbell (2007) reminded that, "A thorough knowledge of the nature and extent of children's natural musical behaviors, including their melodic and rhythmic-motor experiences, is useful in the design of relevant and meaningful curriculum in elementary schools" (p. 32). By inquiring into children's music-making experiences, music educators may become better informed. Thus, they may consider what children already know and accordingly make use of that knowledge to design and enact curricula that builds upon children's existing musical experiences.

An important strand of this topic in the music education literature has been regarding the influence of popular culture on children's music preferences and identities as music-makers. Authors including Barrett (2006), Bosacki, Francis-Murray, Pollon, and Elliott (2006), Green (2006), Jones (2006), Campbell and Lum (2007), and Lum (2008) have noted that there has been an incredible influence on the culture of children through electronic and digital media and popular culture. Therefore, it is prudent for music educators to attend to how children demonstrate their musical identities, which are often integrally connected to and influenced by popular culture. Dismissing these influences "results in an underestimation of the complexity of young children's musical thinking" (Barrett, 2006, p. 206). Campbell and Lum (2007) recognized that teachers have a responsibility to be knowledgeable about these influences when they urged:

Teacher knowledge of children's sonic surroundings at home and within their community, including the mediated and technologized musics, is a necessary first

step for designing relevant means for children's holistic development as thoughtful and expressive members of a democratic society. (p. 320)

In their study of children's perceptions of popular music, Bosacki et al. (2006) suggested that the musical preferences of children may be a reflection of "the complex inner worlds of children and preadolescents" (p. 382). In this case, "children's music preferences reflect in part their developing values, conflicts and developmental issues, whereas their music habits also play an active role in shaping their developing identities, including their beliefs and values" (p. 382). These authors called for continued study of children's perceptions of popular music, as most studies tend to focus on teenagers and preteens. They articulated that popular music plays a multifaceted role in children's experiences; thus, there is a need to bridge the gap between the classroom and youth culture as a way to explore an alternate curriculum of student-negotiated pedagogy that is meaningful to the lives of children.

Understanding the musical lives of children within the realm of media and popular culture is tied to music-making in the community context. Jones (2006) suggested that the initial means to understanding the musical experiences of students begins with comprehending the "musical lives of the communities in which they live" (p. 3). He concluded that bridging the musical gap between school and community is of utmost importance "in order to foster musical participation of all students in both lifelong and lifewide scenarios" (p. 3). Imagining such possibilities would allow for music educators to develop music curricula that could "break down barriers between school music and the out-of-school musical lives of their students" (p. 3). Such a task involves

reconceptualizing curricula as Jones (2006) maintained, “In order for music education to regain relevance and return from the musical fringe to the musical mainstream we must rethink the curriculum” (p. 12). Jones admits that this would be a daunting task. However, he encouraged that this reimagining of music education requires rethinking teacher preparation with a strong philosophical grounding, based on reengaging musically with the community. This view would “reflect current realities and prepare the next generation of music teachers to be less narrowly focused musically” (p. 15).

Dzansi (2004) reasoned that an important means of reimagining music education requires consideration of the playground music pedagogy in which children live. Doing so allows for insight into the local communities of children. In her ethnographic work on exploring the disparity between playground music pedagogy and classroom pedagogy in Ghanaian schools, Dzansi (2004) called on teachers to “become researchers of their students, understanding the ways the learners’ backgrounds ‘mesh and conflict’ with the culture of schools” (p. 84). These understandings are supported through conversing with parents as essential informants to music-making in communities, which helps to deepen conceptions of how community experiences shape children’s music playground performances. Dzansi (2004) maintained that the playground pedagogy is reflective of the community context, but more formal music instruction in school stifles this curriculum because “students are introduced to that which has no bearing on their culture and experience” (p. 89). Thus, teachers should welcome opportunities to learn from children as co-teachers in the classroom, like they are on the playground, embracing a pedagogy that is participatory and less audience driven.

In reference to the playground pedagogy, Lum and Campbell (2007) described how the visual and aural music-making knowledge of the playground is part of the overall sonic soundscape, an integral piece of fabric in defining the school's musical culture. They stated that knowledge of these sonic expressions "may lend itself well to the design of educational experiences that build on the known and bridge the gap to children's future musical understandings" (p. 32). The social processes involved in which this sonic soundscape emerges adds a meaningful dimension. "Musical play, and play that is musically involved, are aligned with social relationships, and it is the social action and interaction that often colors the sound" (Lum & Campbell, 2007, p. 33).

In addition to the literature highlighted above, an integral body of literature in the sociology of childhood (Barrett, 2003; Corsaro, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Holmes, 1998; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002; Schwartzman, 2001) continues to inform understanding of the importance of attending to the voices of children and the complexity of their musical thinking. Children are important informants who open the window for adults to see that childhood is both a social and cultural construction. Barrett (2003) described that the rejection of a universal, sole view of childhood "recognises the ways in which children are socialised by a range of forces, including an 'all-pervasive media' " (p. 199). Through her findings in an ethnographic study of young children's song invention, Barrett (2003) addressed how the school paradigm can stifle children's creativity when children become enculturated within a school's "music environment that does not value or encourage such activity, and increasing exposure to education singing practices that reify particular vocal models, styles of vocal presentation, and song materials" (p. 202). She vowed that it is of utmost

importance to pay attention to the creative work that children develop through invented song processes, both individually and collaboratively. Barrett (2003) described that, “it is crucial that children’s musical agency as song makers and the unique processes and practices of children’s communities of musical practice are valued, celebrated, and fostered in early childhood settings” (p. 218). In other writing, Barrett (2006) described that the song-making process may potentially be conceptualized as “a form of musical narrative that builds on their [children’s] experiences thus far, as a means of making emotional sense of themselves and their worlds” (p. 201).

Illuminating through Inquiry

As a way to begin to understand experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), I integrate a telling narrative (Griffin, 2007) to solidify and frame the importance of attending to children’s perspectives on their music experiences. Thus, I lay the aforementioned concerns in the field of music education alongside the voices of children that emerged through the narrative writing in this study. Sharing this narrative allows insight gained through the eyes of children.

In this study, I used tools of ethnography (Bresler, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Van Maanen, 1988) and narrative inquiry (Casey, 1996; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Clandinin et al., 2006; Corvellec, 2006; Engel, 1995; Murphy, 2004; Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007; Polkinghorne, 1995) to inquire into the music experiences of children, both in- and out-of-school, and to investigate the interplay between children’s music experiences in both contexts. The study took place in a Grade 2/3 classroom with 10 boys and 10 girls at an urban elementary

school (Kindergarten–Grade 6) in a large western Canadian city. Although there was some presence of cultural diversity, the children in the school came from primarily Caucasian, middle-class families.

Theoretical underpinnings for the study were grounded in the writings on social constructionism (Dahlberg et al., 1999; Davis, 2004; Greene & Hogan, 2005; Hruby, 2001; Packer & Goicoechea, 2000; Schwandt, 2000), experience (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Dewey, 1938), and attentive listening (Aoki, 1993; Davis, Sumara, & Luce-Kapler, 2000; Greene, 1993). These groundings led to the central research questions that guided the inquiry: 1) How do children experience music in their daily lives? and 2) How do children's musical experiences in their daily lives interplay with their in-school music experiences?

Through this two-phase, three-month study, I spent full days with the children as a participant-observer, attending to their individual and group music-making in a variety of spaces in and around the school. The first phase, which lasted the entire three months, focused on inquiring into all 20 of the children's music-making experiences in the regular classroom, music classroom, physical education class, computer lab time, and during other regular school activities (e.g., recess, lunch, and outdoor play). I spent time conversing with the children on an individual and whole-class level regarding their music experiences and their perspectives on in- and out-of-school music. All of these interactions provided insight into children's musical engagements. I created field notes about the school setting and the continued interactions between children, children and teachers, and children and me on a daily basis. The first phase also included interviewing individuals and digitally

recording those interviews, collecting samples of student writing, and capturing photographic images of school life and musical activity.

The second phase of the study began in the third month and focused on the out-of-school experiences of three children who were drawn from the larger group of 20. During this phase, I continued in-school observation, along with conversation regarding the children's in-school music experiences. The focus of phase two included, but was not solely limited to, inquiring into children's listening preferences, family involvement with music, attendance of musical performances, private lessons, and practice of music outside of school. To investigate these inquiries, I accompanied the three children to out-of-school contexts to gain a deepened understanding of the place of music in their lives away from the classroom. I visited all three children in their homes, maintained the practice of writing field notes, and engaged in interview conversations with each of the three children's mothers.

The narratives created for both phases (one for phase one and three for phase two) utilize fictionalization (Clough, 2002; Murphy, 2004) in the form of an ongoing dialogue between the participants and me. Clandinin et al. (2006) described fictionalization as "the act of using what you know of something—your life, a place, events—to create a story around this knowledge that shifts the original story of experience" (p. 66). Evolving from the various data gathered, the narratives were derived by compiling true information to recontextualize the experiences of participants. The references to *I* in the narratives reflect my thoughts, as the researcher, in each of the dialogues. All children's names in the narratives were replaced with pseudonyms to protect the anonymity of the participants. Throughout the narratives, there are excerpts taken directly from my field notes as well as

transcripts of conversations with children. Using fictionalization in the form of an ongoing dialogue between the participants and me brought coherence to recontextualized experiences and provided a conversational format that embedded my own voice within the research. Corvellec (2006) espoused the importance of recognizing that there are more fruitful questions to ask about narratives than whether or not they are fictionalized. He eloquently stated, “Narratives are always true, not because they tell something true, but in the sense that it is true that they tell what they tell” (p. 12).

Children’s Perspectives on Musical Experiences

While findings from phase two of the study are reported elsewhere (Griffin, 2009), the narrative shared in this article focuses on the first phase of the study. Segments of this first phase narrative may also be found in Griffin (2011). To provide understanding regarding its context, it is relevant to note that the children and I had finished our music class in the music room with the music teacher, Mrs. Oliver. We proceeded from the music room back to the Grade 2/3 classroom where we began to engage in a class discussion regarding music.

Music All Around

I close my notebook and join the line-up of children at the music room door. “Have a great day,” Mrs. Oliver calls. As we enter the Grade 2/3 classroom, the children congregate on the carpet, waiting for Trudy and Heather [classroom teachers] to return. While we wait, I curiously ask, “What are some of your favourite types of music?” “Rock n’ roll!” is a shouted, quick response from three children. “Yeah, the electric guitar is

awesome,” adds Ethan. “What about rap and heavy metal?” Peter interjects. “I like a little pop,” shares Lara. “Me too,” adds Bridget. A number of heads quickly bob up and down in agreement. Edie chimes in, “I like to listen to classical and even some jazz.”

Complimenting the group, I state, “Wow, you sure know many different kinds of music! Do you know some artists, too?” “Oh, like you mean Green Day and all that?” asks Ethan. As I nod my head, Peter echoes, “Yeah, Green Day’s the best!” “I have Bon Jovi and U2 CDs,” says Kara. Macy shares, “What about Gwen Stefani and Avril Lavigne?” “Hilary Duff, Hilary Duff, Hilary Duff!” five girls chant. Quickly turning my head toward them, I inquire, “What can you tell me about her music?” Raising her hand, Lara points out, “Well I just like how she sings and I like her background music and stuff and she really, like she has really good songs. . . . She doesn’t have all like bad, all like you know, the swear words.”

At this point, Trudy and Heather enter the class and come to join us on the carpet. Overhearing the discussion, Heather points out, “Sounds like you are having a great conversation here, please continue.” “Yeah, we’re talking about music,” Casey says. Smiling at Heather, I continue, inquisitively asking the class, “So, where do you mostly listen to music?” “I have a Discman and my brother has an iPod,” shares Kara. “There’s lots of music on my computer and MP3 player. I also hear tons of music on movies,” remarks Cody. “My alarm clock plays music and so does my mom’s cell phone,” Daisy maintains. “My mom’s too,” Jared agrees. Michael adds, “I hear music at my piano lessons and also at church. I like mostly listening to a CD when I am bored.” “I sometimes like listening to smooth, quiet music when I am lying in bed,” says Sabrina. “You know the kind that has the water sounds in the background? It helps me go to sleep.” Hailey

points out, “We always have music on in the car!” “Us too,” says Bridget, while a number of heads nod. “There are so many places that we hear music! It’s all around,” I indicate. Peter says, “Everyone sort of needs to know music, a little bit about music. It’s just an important thing about society.”

Music in the Middle

“I just like when music is not too smooth, but not too hard either,” comments Jake. “Yeah, that’s sort of like school music,” says Casey. “What do you mean?” I ask, interested. “Well, it’s in the middle, I kind of like it, but kind of don’t.” Hesitantly, Peter speaks up suggesting, “Well I sort of like music class, but it can get really boring, but I actually like *music*, like the whole scheme of it. But music class I just don’t like it very much because they never play any music that we actually like.” “Is that something that you ever asked your teacher, Mrs. Oliver about, Peter?” “Actually I did.” “What did she have to say?” “She explained to us that she was trying to teach us songs that you wouldn’t hear on the radio. I guess it’s just so we can learn a variety of stuff.” “Did you have any suggestions for her?” “Well maybe like every 3 weeks or so she might play a song that we actually *like* and we might actually get to like, listen to it and actually do our own movements, not like run around and stuff though. *That* I’d probably like, and then music class might be one of my favourites” (Griffin, 2011, pp. 84-85).

Daisy adds, “Yeah, it’s not my favourite, but not my most unfavourite subject either.” “Well, are there any things that you would like to be able to learn in music?” I ask the group. Peter continues, “Besides listening to some of our music, I think it’s really fun if we keep playing the instruments.” “And don’t forget the boomwhackers!” calls Daisy.

The rest of the children unanimously concur. Bridget quickly adds, “I wish we could learn all the scale with the hand signs because we actually already *know* them all, we just can’t use them.” “Yeah, especially *fa* and *ti*,” adds Sabrina. “We could do lots more songs if we could use all those,” states Bridget. “It’s sort of not fair that we have to wait until we’re in a different grade to use them.”

Music Is...

The class pauses for a moment and I think about how our discussion might proceed. “You all know so much about music!” I mention. “So, if someone was to ask you what else you know about *music*, what would you say?” Cody quickly raises his hand, “I know, I know! There are usually four sections, like the brass and strings, oh, and I forget the other two.” “Oh, you mean the instrument families?” I ask. “Yeah, yeah.” I overhear Chad call out “Percussion,” while Aiden adds, “Woodwinds.” Edie points out, “And you can use those different kinds of instruments and put a whole bunch of notes together. Then it makes music!” Macy agrees, sharing, “If you put together a really high and low note, it might not sound good. You just sort of have to try them out and figure out what sounds right.” “It’s usually best when there is a good melody and rhythm inside,” indicates Michael. “Hmm,” I respond with interest. “I guess you could say music just basically makes noise. It’s usually something people do,” reveals Jake.

“There are other kinds of music too,” suggests Bridget. “Like blowing on a piece of grass. Sometimes I do that at home. It makes music.” “What about stomping my feet?” asks Madeline. “You can take a stick and hit it on something and that makes music too,” claims Lara, “and I love the sound of horses neighing. That sounds like music to me.”

After a brief pause, Foster further states, “You know, sometimes music sounds good and sometimes, it just doesn’t.” “Yeah,” Michael says, “that’s why I guess you just have to keep practicing even though it kind of digs into your time.” Jared agrees, stating, “I have to usually play the piano for 30 minutes each day. It’s not always the best.” Edie begs to differ, sharing, “But that’s how you get better. By practicing a lot, that’s how I figured out how to make up a song.” “How did you do that?” Jared asks. “I wrote it down and I started playing stuff on the piano and now it’s pretty much a full song.” “What did it sound like?” continues Jared. “The words were kind of in a tune, but I had trouble with the second note. First it was *do, mi, mi*, but then I changed the melody a little and I went *do*, sharp. Then it started to sound way better.” I suggest, “That’s like what Macy was talking about earlier. I guess you mostly have to listen with your ears and try out different notes until it sounds good!” “That’s what I did!” says Edie.

“So, do you think that it’s important to have Music class in school?” I inquire. Bridget begins by sharing, “Music is really important ’cause well, if you don’t learn music you can basically never know it.” “Well, I am not so sure,” Daisy confesses. “Because really all you do is sing and say tas and ti-tis. ’Cause if you’re not learning piano or anything, you don’t really need to learn music.” “But,” Kara explains, “it’s a good chance for the people who don’t get to do all those fun musical things outside of school to do something inside of school.” “Sometimes the stuff you learn inside school can help you with the music outside school, or it can be the other way around. Then everyone else gets to learn about it too.” Casey appears undecided about the importance as he proceeds by saying, “It’s a hard decision but, if you didn’t know what music is, you couldn’t like, for example, if you wanted to hear like a CD you couldn’t hear it ’cause you don’t know what

the name is. Music is just like a thing you learn in school, and ah, I don't really know if it's important, but . . . you need to know it sometimes" (Griffin, 2011, p. 85). Probing further, I ask, "Do you think you could live without it, Casey?" After pausing a few seconds, he decides, "Yes, you could live without it, but some people, if you really, really like music, you might really wanna go into school and learn it." "I think you should learn it, especially if you want to be a singer," Sabrina points out. Jake announces, "Yeah, it's good if you want to be a musician. You wouldn't have a chance to get good at it if you didn't practice in school. Besides, school Music makes the school a happier place because sometimes you can hear music around the school even after we leave Music class. If you are down, music can cheer you up."

"Hmm." I pause to reflect on what has just been said. After a brief silence, I say, "We are having such a great discussion, Grade 2/3, but it looks like Trudy and Heather are ready for us to move on to math. Thank you for sharing your feelings and experiences with me. I'll look forward to chatting with you more." Trudy calls for the children to move back to the tables. The children proceed, leaving me with much to think about.

Resonances Across Children's Experiences

Utilizing Conle's (1996) framework of resonance, I looked across children's perspectives regarding their musical experiences to formulate resonances of analysis within this narrative. Through spending time with the Grade 2/3 children in many contexts in and around the school, I came to understand that there were multiple layers of complexity that underpinned their musical experiences and perspectives regarding music in their lives. The children had distinct ideas about their musical likes and dislikes, both in

and out of Music class, and their overall awareness of music was very acute. Much of the children's discussion of music centred on their interests from outside of school. Many were quite knowledgeable about a variety of rock and pop groups and that influence was definitely apparent in their talk. The children were quite aware of the many ways in which they can listen to music and the prevalence of technology and pop culture influence was very evident. From iPods to cell phones to virtual toys, they noted that all such pieces of technology play music. These various pieces of technology seemed to be in the lives of many children. Such influences clearly shaped the lives of children's musical worlds. This finding supports the previous writings of Barrett (2006), Bosacki et al. (2006), Economidou Stavrou (2006), Campbell and Lum (2007) and Lum (2008), who also noted the influence of popular culture on children's music preferences and identities as music-makers.

The presence of technology allowed children to engage with music as listeners, an integral component of the music curriculum. I was uncertain, however, as to how these experiences of listening to music were blending with the listening experiences in music class. The children were quick to point out that this type of listening was not the kind of music that fits with music class. If this out-of-class listening is a central part of their daily realities, I wonder why this type of listening is not present in music class.

In other writing (Griffin, 2009; 2011), I discussed the tensions that became apparent between the in- and out-of-school music experiences of children. To offer context, I explained:

While the children did share with me sentiments about school Music, there seemed to be a discernable difference between referring to music as a place, as in music class, as opposed to music as a thing, something different from school music. Their varied out-of-school experiences of music-making, listening to music, family involvement in music, attendance at musical performances, private music instruction, and practice of music outside of school seemed to involve a different type of socially constructed musical knowing than their knowing of musical experiences in school music. Through conversations with many students, I came to understand that music class in school), and all other music experiences, often *interrupt* one another since each is marked by characteristics that do not necessarily interplay with the other. This leads me to the realization that according to these children, their musical experiences in their daily lives most often do not consciously interplay with their in-school music experiences. (2009, p. 172; 2011, p. 86)

Within the school day, I observed a great deal of music-making happening outside the walls of the formal music classroom, frequently evident in the areas of the Grade 2/3 classroom, physical education class, computer lab, and during other regular school activities (e.g., recess, lunch, outdoor play). In these places, I watched children engage in individual, partner, and group music-making through singing, chanting, humming, moving, creating, and listening to music. The majority of the music-making I noticed in these contexts, however, was not recognizably connected to the musical content that the children were learning in Music class. It appeared to me that it was more rare to hear

children singing or humming something from music class than to hear them draw upon music they knew from elsewhere.

Looking specifically at the Grade 2/3 formal music class, throughout the school week, the children appeared excited to engage in many routines that were part of music. They were knowledgeable about musical terminology and enjoyed taking part in a variety of activities that involved developing rhythmic competency, singing, playing instruments, reading, writing, creating, improvising, exploratory moving, and dancing. Based upon my own teaching experiences and my interpretation of the curriculum document, it is appropriate to state that the children were certainly engaged in an array of meaningful activities that would lead them toward developing increased musical understanding (Montgomery, 2002). From my observations in music class, it was clear that there was a balance in the attention given to conceptual and skill areas that were outlined in the curriculum document. There was evidence that the children were engaged in focusing on the study of the musical elements (i.e., rhythm, melody, harmony, form, and expression) through utilizing the suggested skills (i.e., singing, playing instruments, listening, moving, reading, writing, and creating). From this point of view, I believe Mrs. Oliver was following the expectations of the curricular document as she honoured what she was directed to do. In addition, I found her to be a motivating teacher, knowledgeable about the subject area, and she always seemed to strive for a variety of strategies to assist students in their musical learning. From the early stages of my time at the school, it was quickly evident the children enjoyed Mrs. Oliver's Music classes.

As a music teacher who also taught French and directed extra-curricular music activities, Mrs. Oliver was indeed very busy. As I noticed her routines, I was reminded

very much of my own experiences as a former school music teacher, often frantically feeling as though there was time for a little of everything, but not a great deal of focused time for anything specific, let alone time for truly engaging in conversations with children. I recall a specific instance where Mrs. Oliver strove to be connected to her students' interests as she planned a talent show in which the children could share some type of musical interest, whether it be playing an instrument, bringing in some recorded music from home, or connecting with some friends to showcase a musical performance. I think this type of activity can be effective for connecting with students and the children led me to suggest that this type of connection to students' interests needs to reach a higher level and subsequently appear with consistency across all instruction. However, I do not see this as a fault of Mrs. Oliver's; rather, I believe the question of drawing upon children's musical interests and seeing their experiences fluidly interplaying between in- and out-of-school becomes a far broader question of the music education profession as a whole.

Through the Eyes of Children

The various pieces of literature highlighted in the beginning of this article, along with the insights revealed through the eyes of children in the narrative, certainly encourage elementary music educators to create increasingly meaningful music opportunities for children by heightening the possibilities of interplay between in- and out-of-school music experiences. Based upon my experiences with this group of children, I offer some possibilities for increasing the opportunities for interplay between these two contexts.

- Encourage children to keep student journals that reflect their musical interests (text, pictures, drawings, or photographs).
- Facilitate opportunities for students to share their journals so as to draw upon students' experiences.
- Allow children to engage in peer teaching in music class.
- Invite children to help determine ways to embed music class activities into other routines of the school, as well as integrate other forms of school music-making into music class.
- Provide opportunities for children to talk about their musical interests, likes, and dislikes on a regular basis in order to better facilitate meaningful musical instruction.
- In conversation with children, music teachers might determine ways for children to bring in and discuss various types of music that they like to listen to outside of school.
- Invite parents to be a part of the decision-making process around curricula. Conversations with parents could provide deepened insights into children's out of school music experiences. (Griffin, 2009, p. 173; 2010, p. 47; 2011, p. 87)

While the findings and suggestions that evolved from this study are contextualized to the specific group of Grade 2/3 children, they pose pertinent questions that can affect the profession as a whole. How do music educators attend to children's daily music experiences within the context of school music curricula? Why do many children

experience music so differently in their in- and out-of-school places? How might children's interests interact with mandated school music curricula? How can children's daily music experiences provide a cornerstone for music teaching and learning?

Attending to the musical lives of children ought to become central to what we do as music educators. In recognizing the place for children's experiences within the instruction of elementary music, Lum and Campbell (2007) thoughtfully articulated,

With an awareness of the soundscapes of school activity outside the music classroom, music educators can adjust their lessons to fit the musical knowledge and skills that are already prevalent among children, and between classroom teachers and children, in their daily instruction. (p. 45)

As we continue to delve into the complexities of the musical lives of children, it is essential to persevere in seeking the musical narratives of children that provide profound insights into the layers of music that children experience on a daily basis. Articulating these narratives becomes essential to advancing the discourse in music education research, allowing for educators to reflect upon and plan for contextualized music experiences that are relevant to children's lives and thus, become embedded within the multiple layers of school contexts and beyond.

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