

## **Culturally Responsive Research Projects in a Title I Elementary Center for Fine Arts**

By

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is a research project report for the purpose of developing methods to document cultural responsiveness and student identification of cultural identity in the community, school and in online global cultural exchanges at a 98% minority Title I Elementary Center for Fine Arts. This school was ranked as one of the 300 lowest performing schools in Florida with a county graduation rate for minorities among the lowest in the state. Three phases constituted the Rawlings approach for observing and assessing student cultural responsiveness in arts education: Phase one involved defining cultural responsiveness and cultural relevancy from students in the Rawlings school community. Phase two included global cultural exchanges and alternative assessment strategies development. Finally, phase three saw individual student profiles of cultural identity through music combined with general education instruction (STEM and STEAM) approaches. Project report results helped to develop responsive and relevant approaches to cultural responsiveness in the community, classroom, and through a network of international online university and community music educators.*

**Keywords:** cultural, relevancy, music, global, STEAM

I, Valerie Freeman, Alachua County Schools Director of Educational Equity and Outreach, believe that the engagement, collaboration, and culturally valued exposure that this inclusive appreciation of the Arts provides to the families at Rawlings Elementary, will result in a spirited transformation of who we want our students to become, by being who they need us to be. (V. Freeman, personal communication, April 23, 2019)

The Rawlings approach developed in this project report documented student cultural identity through a variety of assessment means and techniques. Five educators at Rawlings Elementary Center for Fine Arts in the areas of drama, dance, general music, art, and general education developed these assessment means and techniques. The essential question that led to this approach was, what models, designs, and practices are most successful in assessing student learning of music in diverse educational systems?

In this paper, the Title I designation of the Rawlings Elementary Center for Fine Arts with a 98% minority population in Gainesville, Florida, will represent this diverse educational system. According to the U.S. Department of Education (2018), Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet state academic standards. The vision of the center is to offer increased opportunities within arts content areas to continue to develop students academically and artistically preparing them to be responsible contributing citizens of a globally connected world.

There are four primary goals of the Rawlings arts program that guided the project: The first is to increase student achievement through performing and visual art experiences. The second and third are to infuse arts into all curricular areas within the school day for every student

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and to display performance and achievement to the greater Alachua County community and the state of Florida. The fourth is to prepare students to enter district performing arts programs in a variety of arts settings and content areas. Grades 1 to 5 contain a curriculum core of fine arts, dance, instrumental music, visual arts, vocal performance, and theatrical studies, each taught by a full-time teacher.

## **Review of the Literature**

### **Culturally Responsive Education**

Educators must establish a student's cultural competency by constructing collaborative interactions between the school's home/community and the school culture (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Researchers Sullivan (1974) and Bowers and Flinders (1990) define the term *culturally responsive* as an educator's academic partnership with students anchored in commitment, respect, integrity, and honoring diversity. Tobias (2017) discussed the need for an in-the-field focus on student engagement that reflects the socioeconomic environment of our students:

Music education could benefit from more reflexive and critical engagement with technology while accounting for social, cultural, and economic issues. Explicit application and analysis of technology through critical and sociocultural frameworks currently resides large in researchers' scholarship. This might be expected when the majority of professional development related to technology focuses on issues of awareness.... Approaching technology comprehensively calls for music educators to address social and cultural issues in their practice. (p. 300)

In the Rawlings approach, the students bring the music from all facets of their community into the classroom. The music examples, discussed in the Method section, come directly from each student's life in their east side Gainesville community. Playground games, step dance, jump

roping chants, hip-hop, and rhythms are incorporated into the curriculum, arranged for classroom instrumentation in collaboration with the students and shared globally in cultural exchanges using online technology such as Skype, Zoom, and FaceTime. Several forms of assessment follow this, and when combined with each phase of the approach, they yield a clear idea of each student's cultural identity as explored in collaboration with the teacher and online participants.

The online technologies utilized in the present study are Skype, Zoom, and FaceTime. We selected technologies based on the location, time of day, and connectivity, with more remote locations such as the barrios of Port au Prince, Haiti, requiring the use of FaceTime and Zoom for enhanced connectivity.

### **Cultural Relevancy: Defining Culture and Comparing With Online Global Exchanges**

To develop an approach for observing and assessing student musical cultural identity, a clear definition for the terms *culture* and *culture relevancy* come from the work of Campbell (2004). The first example, "The world is rich with musical sounds which distinguish one culture from the next, and even the most local and familiar sound environments, heard in a moment's time, are reflective of a culture" (Campbell, 2004, p. 32), is relevant to the present study through the definition of local and familiar sound environments. The Rawlings approach utilizes every documentation of musical sound determined by the student to be relevant and from the community. We include generational examples from parents and family. For example, a review of ethnomusicological documentation of students tapping on their desks for their foundation and importance. The result of this exercise yielded a variety of stories from the students of musical interaction in church and with parents and family members at social activities or improvisations with friends while listening to popular music after school.

The second selected quotation, “A musical culture may be as tightly conceived of as what is heard within one family home or as expansive as a neighborhood, a community formed by ethnicity or religious practices, or region defined by geographic, ecological, or political boundaries” (Campbell, 2004, p. 36), is particularly relevant to the future development of the pilot study. The Rawlings approach constitutes progression of student musical preference and engagement in the home, community, school, and onward through live international cultural exchanges.

In the Rawlings approach the first two phases are recognizing student culturally relevant music experiences and incorporating them into the curriculum. Through collaboration with the International Society for Music Education (ISME), the Rawlings students engaged in cultural exchanges with ISME members in schools, universities, and community-based programs in a variety of countries.

### **Research Questions**

- What models, designs, and practices are most successful in assessing student cultural identity in diverse settings. What reading and writing techniques can be adapted for culturally responsive arts education?
- How can international comparative education be utilized in a Title I music education setting?
- How does a combination of culturally responsive teaching for and by students with inclusion of arts that are personal to their daily lives help them to retain their arts education experiences?
- How can the combined roles of teacher and learner by the students and international educators influence outcomes?
- What critique techniques can be utilized for student led assessment in arts education?

## Method

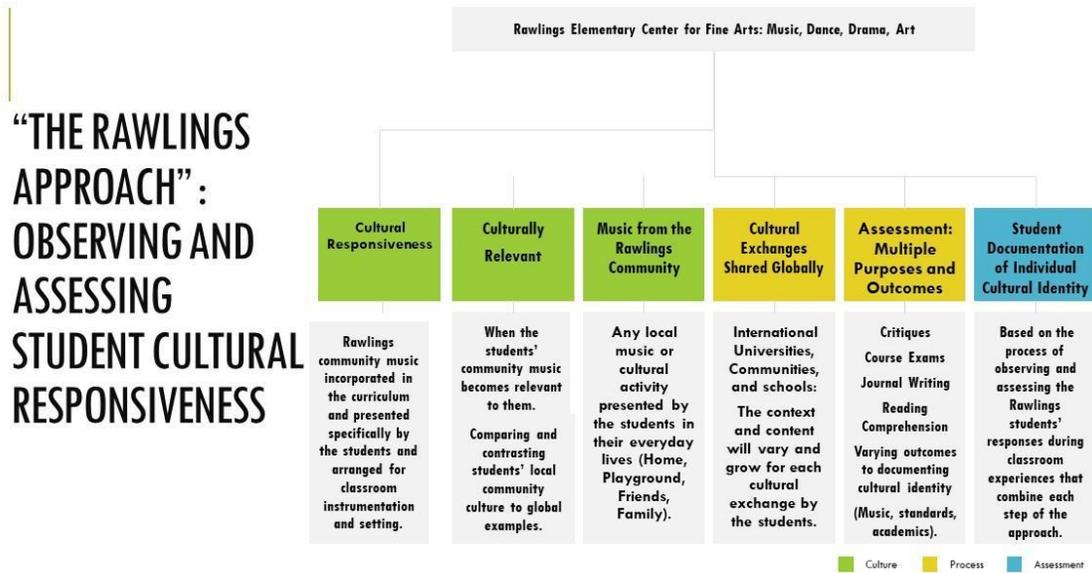


Figure 1. The Rawlings approach to observing and assessing student cultural responsiveness.

### Phase One: Cultural Responsiveness, Cultural Relevancy, and Music From the Rawlings Community

The foundation of this culturally responsive approach is to have the students share and arrange the music experiences in their homes, with friends and family (including generational music from adults), and in the playgrounds and outdoor areas of the community after school. These are arranged into the classroom curriculum followed with shared online global cultural exchanges so the students can compare their community music with a global scope. The first phase allowed students to formalize their understanding of culturally relevant community music.

## **Phase Two: Global Cultural Exchanges and Alternative Assessment Strategies**

### **Development**

Music education professors; community musicians; and students in Taiwan, Spain, Ireland, Kenya, Guinea, Brazil, Canada, Columbia, and Haiti will constitute the first year participants in the online global cultural exchanges. We designed these to be organic activities between the participants. Sharing Rawlings community music and international demonstrations by online participants is the only expectation. From there, both groups of participants determine the topics and exchanges. Books on each country are available to the students in their homerooms to enhance their understanding of the region prior to each live online session. We are also developing reading and writing exercises that compare the styles, cultures, and experiences of the online exchanges.

### **Phase Three: Introductory Assessment of Student Engagement Through STEAM-Based Approaches**

Students participated in classroom activities that utilized the information and experiences in Phases 1 and 2 to better formalize their interpretation of what constitutes their cultural musical identity. This utilized varying STEAM based approaches to documentation.

**End-of-year course exams.** The district develops end-of-year course exams for fourth graders in each elementary school. To ensure cultural relevancy in this assessment, Rawlings teachers developed practice exercises that change the test preparation questions developed by the district music teachers with those that represent the culturally responsive curriculum in the classroom.

Sternberg, Lipka, Newman, Wildfeuer, and Grigorenko's (2006) findings reinforce this work. Sternberg et al. found that students excel in tests and content that are connected to their

culture. Alaskan and Kenyan students did well on tests that incorporated culture but poorly on standardized tests. There are a variety of assessment methods incorporated into the Rawlings approach which are based directly on the Rawlings community music examples of the students.

**Reading comprehension.** Dr. Debra Chandler, an applied anthropologist, comparativist, and educator involved with Rawlings, contributed the assessments for reading comprehension. The assessments carried out in this study constitute alternative assessments, which are also authentic, performance, or direct assessments. These assessments will inform and help to coconstruct the assessment-based literacy instruction, community involvement, student engagement, and inquiry-based recommendations. Currently, Rawlings is an underperforming school with below average literacy achievement.

Poverty is the most likely correlate of student literacy achievement (Cunningham, 2006). We view the Rawlings community (largely poor and African American) as a deep, complex context with which to coconstruct a culturally responsive and relevant integrated curriculum and transformational pedagogy. Michael Apple, the sociologist of education who researches power relations in schools, asks these questions: For whose purpose and for whose power?

By empowering learners with purposefulness, shared decision-making, and a culturally relevant curriculum, outcomes should improve. The international and comparative education component of this research study situates culturally relevant learning as the center of reading comprehension and literacy. Rawlings students engage with carefully constructed grade level, standard-based reading passages and project-based learning prepared specifically for this research study. Students will be exposed to a variety of international educators through distance education. Using a video-based communication tool students interact with educators and musicians from around the world. To enhance the real time learning experience, we will create

reading comprehension exercises to prepare students in the areas of geography, social studies, foreign language, English vocabulary, science, math, and culture. Reading passage exercises aligned with the state standards in English, language arts, science, math, and social studies will help to increase outcomes on the English, language arts, math, and science high stakes testing implemented to ascertain adequate yearly progress.

This is a reflective, qualitative research project that imbues student input throughout the process to document cultural relevancy. The overarching goal is to ascertain if documenting this integrative, whole language approach of music and music education combined with international and comparative education will directly improve test scores and enhance overall relevancy in school culture.

**Integrating writing and the fine arts.** Tamyra Telles is currently working for Alachua County as a professional development specialist and is assisting with the integration of writing and fine arts in the pilot. Teaching in relation to the fine arts goes well beyond the scope of discipline-focused principles within performing or visual arts. Integrating aspects of the performing and visual arts into teaching methodologies of other disciplines—and vice versa—can have significant positive impact in student achievement across all metrics of learning. For example, many students struggle with articulating a thesis or opinion and then supporting their ideas with substantive and contextual arguments, examples, or facts when writing an essay. A student may state, “Vanilla is the best tasting ice cream,” but then be unable to support that statement sufficiently in a written text.

One way we are addressing this challenge at Rawlings is by integrating the concept of supporting ideas into the fine arts curriculum. Thus rather than simply discussing ideas about fine arts as an entirely subjective element, students will learn how to move from stating who

their favorite musician is, for example, to stating why that artist is their favorite musician. Accordingly, teachers will prompt students to expand and support an opinion as to why they believe that Miles Davis is a better trumpet player than Dizzy Gillespie, for example. Likewise, they will ask students to provide evidence as to why they may feel the works of Picasso have affected the world more profoundly than Monet. Teachers will accomplish this using content related ideas, principles, and concepts. When students justify their answers, we see that they are using a higher level of thinking and becoming more engaged in the fine arts curriculum. Discussion becomes deeper and more personal to the students. Mastery of the concepts occurs more frequently and fluidly, and knowledge transfer becomes more evident in their academic performance.

This intellectual growth enhances students' writing capabilities. When students learn how to support their opinions in discussions or debates, they then begin to understand how to write supporting sentences and paragraphs in their essays. They become more aware of how to justify their opinions or use facts to back up their statements. An essay becomes more personal and relevant to the student and much more meaningful to the reader. As a result, the interaction has the impact of creating more engagement and a foundation for the teacher to build upon for further learning and development across multiple academic areas. The fine arts are a special curriculum, and through integration across various academic disciplines, represent a tool to enhance equally the academic needs and social-emotional needs of all students.

**Writing prompts.** Teachers initiate writing prompts through journals for each student based on experiences in the Skype cultural exchange sessions and their opinions related to the process of arranging their community-based music into the classroom curriculum and instrumentation. Where is the Rawlings community? How do you describe the Rawlings

community? What is there to do in the Rawlings community? In the second year of project development, we will introduce a discussion of the meaning of culturally responsive education from the opinions and perspective of the students. From discussions with international educators and supplemental readings on the countries we Skyped to, the students have begun to document in their music class journals their responses as they compare their lifestyles to the countries in the cultural exchanges.

**Critique-based student assessment.** Sharon Kuchinski, department chair and theatre director, developed the critique-based assessment we used. The primary objectives are to

1. Provide a verbal critique to help strengthen a peer's performance,
2. Change and strengthen one's own performance based on peers' and director's critiques,
3. Reflect on the strength and needs of one's own performance,
4. Demonstrate effective audience etiquette and constructive criticism,
5. Identify correct vocabulary used in a formal theatre critique,
6. Develop critical thinking skills, and
7. Develop skills of observation.

**Procedures for first and second grades.** We introduce the critique process for first and second grades as "Good News / Bad News." Goals and objectives remain the same. We then instruct students to observe an activity, rehearsal, or performance. After, students relate what went well, what can be improved, and what their favorite part was. Students cannot name individuals in their critiques unless it is a solo performance. They review critiques before the next rehearsal or before they repeat the activity. For first and second grades, this is the first time students experience acting notes.

**Procedures for third, fourth, and fifth grades.** We introduce or review what a critique is and the purpose of peer, personal, and director critiques. Students observe a news script reading, performance, rehearsal, or drama activity. They provide critiques in a positive, constructive way. We encourage students to reflect and explain why they believe their critique is important to the success of a performance. Students can offer a critique by raising their hands and saying, “Critique,” after an observation. We guide students to ensure they establish an atmosphere of trust, which is essential in building a strong ensemble. Critiques take place throughout the year in theatre, dance, art, and music.

### **Findings**

Phase Three is a combination of the results from the assessments proctored and organized into portfolios and profiles for each student to use as a guide toward understanding their cultural identity in relation to the world around them. The following information constitutes the results of the first year of the project.

#### **Music From the Community**

Students in the classroom arranged a variety of music examples from their local communities. They selected four main categories: (a) Motown; (b) hip-hop dance, rhythms, and songs; (c) playground chants and step dance (in the style of Black colleges); and (d) rhythms found in all manner of the community, such as in popular music, in church services, in improvising with friends, and from family members at home.

#### **Cultural Exchanges Shared Globally**

**Kenya.** Dr. David Akombo, music education department chair of Jackson State University Skyped to Rawlings Elementary for two cultural exchanges. In the first, he discussed Kenyan culture, the environment, and the traditions utilizing traditional music such as Jambo

Bwana and traditional rhythms of eastern Africa. In response, the Rawlings students presented traditional hip-hop rhythms and dances such as “Infinite Dab,” “Orange Justice,” “floss,” “Hype,” and “Tidy.” The rhythms demonstrated by the students were the first examples of an ethnographic documentation of everyday rhythms created in their communities. Before observation in class, students played these rhythms on their desks in the classroom. When interviewed as to their origins, the responses were all related to the Rawlings community. Common responses included church, with friends, from parents who had music experience in local ensembles, from brothers and sisters, and improvisations from popular music. Student questions demonstrated their new experiences with world culture: Some asked, “Are there houses in Africa?”

**Haiti.** Gertrude Bien-Aime established the Notre Maison orphanage for children with disabilities in Port-au-Prince, Haiti, over twenty years ago. Through collaboration with teachers in the United States and Haiti, we established the Haitian Center for Inclusive Education. This cultural exchange, which included students at both Rawlings and in Haiti, resulted in a sharing of music as well as a discussion of social justice. We showed the Rawlings students a PowerPoint presentation that included photos of the children, the community that is still rebuilding from earthquakes, hurricanes, and most recently violent protests in the streets. The students asked questions that were more direct to the needs of the children there and perhaps demonstrated growth in their discussion taking place in these cultural changes when they all called out together, “Fundraiser!” in response to solutions to the difficulties in Haiti. Bien-Aime sang “Happy Birthday” in Creole to one of the Rawlings students, and the tone of the cultural exchange returned to an exchange of music.

**Canada.** A class of students at Windsor University under the direction of Dr. Danielle Sirek participated in a Skype lesson about a playground game that incorporated a farm scenario in which the participants dance and attempt to keep the farmer from catching the farm animal by moving in time with the music as they sing the lyrics. In response during this cultural exchange, the Rawlings students demonstrated traditional hip-hop dances (e.g., Infinite Dab, Orange Justice, floss, Tidy, moonwalk) and rhythms they use on the playgrounds on the east side of Gainesville, Florida. In follow up lessons, we will switch the songs and dances between Canadian and American participants to complete the cultural exchange.

**Ireland.** Dr. Phil Mullen, a past board member of ISME and chair of the ISME Community Music Activity commission, led a session on traditional Irish music, which the students demonstrated. Mullen reviewed specific characteristics of traditional Irish instrumental music. Facts included the use of AABB with minor deviation; the end of the second B section tends to include enhanced excitement and audience participation through verbalization, *whooping*. Traditional instrumentation typically includes the bodhran, a goatskin frame drum with use of bones and spoons. When traditional instrumentation is not available, the students utilize the instrumentation of their Rawlings community music ensemble. Students demonstrated rhythms for dance with regular quavers and virtually no spaces (reels) and 6/8 patterns (jigs) with a small improvisational personalization. Musicians, as is the style, add their own ornamentation to the tunes to make their sound distinctive. As is traditional in Irish music, students learned the music aurally. A discussion of hip-hop on Irish music took place with Dr. Mullen, and the students demonstrated traditional Rawlings community music.

**Taiwan.** Dr. Jian-Jun Chen-Edmund of the University of Minnesota Duluth is fluent in Japanese Kodo drumming. The students utilized blue plastic barrels and paint buckets with

drumsticks as their primary performance instrumentation when authentic instruments were not available. This instrument choice also connects to the items used in the Rawlings community music lessons. Correct percussion technique and verbalization were taught and utilized by the students in their responses. Rawlings students asked questions about Japanese culture and demonstrated Rawlings community music to Chen-Edmund.

**Spain.** Dr. Emma Rodriguez Suarez presented a lesson on flamenco music to the students. She offered a narrative description of the lesson:

The desired outcome was for the students to keep a repeated Flamenco-style simplified rhythmic pattern on a percussion instrument to an authentic flamenco recording. As students sat, they seemed excited by the beat accompaniment they had just performed to their first YouTube Flamenco recording of the class today. Hands were waving, percussion sticks clapping together, and the noisy locomotion of joy was palpable. As the presenter, I was happy to see their high-performance ability and enthusiasm for the arts, especially considering their openness for a new culture. Evident was the students' attitude and willingness to try new things through consistent attempts to engage in a new language and performance style. I proceeded by quietly asking for the Spanish vocabulary word for palms, known as "*las palmas*", which on visual assessment 80% remembered but needed further pronunciation review, yet they were not hesitant to try. Having a simplified, basic beat pattern was crucial for the success of this lesson. Therefore, I chose a simplified pattern for our first meeting. A new musical term was introduced, and I gave the known name "*Flamenco Rumba*" to repeat and remember. As it would be expected students initially lacked clarity and precision both in language and in clapping. Yet it was not long before the newly learned rhythm became assimilated. On

visual assessment, there were students that performed brilliantly; there were students that needed focus and extra attention; but a large majority of the class stayed with the recording, with the beat, in an out of rhythmic pattern for the entirety of their performance. At the end of this portion of class students were exhibiting enthusiasm for a new culture and its music, knowledge of a new cultures' musical vocabulary, the ability to perform on percussion instruments two Flamenco-style rhythmic patterns, and usage of greetings in Spanish. This was indeed a very successful class.

**Guinea.** Lansana Camara is a community music from Conakry, Guinea, who shared several lessons with the students including stories behind the music in his African community. Poor children in the village have no shoes to go to school, and one person came each week to help them get shoes. When the man left, all the children called to him (in their native language), "I Go With You." Camara composed this piece on the kora, an African harp like instrument. This is another example of poverty communicated through music that can be shared with the students. On the balafon, he played an original piece entitled "1, 2, 3, 4 Let's Go together, We Play Together, We Sing Together" as a melody and lyric and then a tradition song from Guinea the children repeated on the classroom xylophones. The song is meant to share joy in being together even in times that are not happy in the community. These social concepts are relevant to our students in the Rawlings Community and can be a part of their journaling and classroom discussions.

### **Reading Comprehension**

Each international collaborator wrote a one-page paper on the cultural significance of the lesson. Rawlings teachers arranged these for a fourth grade reading level, and we will add comprehension questions for the students to answer. The results are culturally relevant and real-

world experiences incorporated into what is usually generic reading comprehension exercises in the general education classroom.

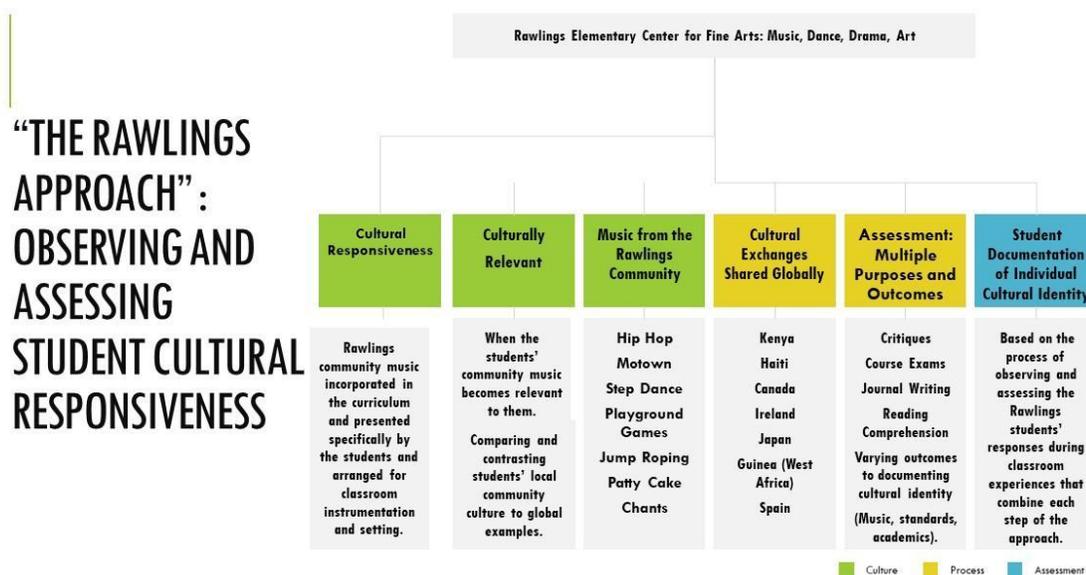


Figure 2. Results and examples of each of the step in the Method section.

## Discussion

The Rawlings Approach for assessing student cultural responsiveness developed in the first year of this project generated some key questions for reflection on the student experience to guide future development. Jackie Johnson, Alachua County Public Schools district spokesperson for the Rawlings educators who developed this project, developed four reflection questions. The responses are by Dr. Donald DeVito and Brandon Hidalgo (music), Sharon Kuchinski (drama), and Tamyra Telles (district professional development coordinator).

### Reflection Question 1

“How did the combined roles of teacher and learner by the students and international educators influence outcomes?”

DeVito      The students compared and contrasted Hip Hop music with traditional International music presented in class. Traditional music included Japanese and Taiwanese Kodo drumming, music from Guinea West Africa, Haitian traditional songs, Spanish Flamenco music, Irish and Canadian music all on Skype with educators from the representative countries. The students begin by learning the traditional music by the presenter on Skype and then demonstrate their Rawlings community traditional music.

                Afterward, comparing and contrasting the rhythms (song, dance and percussion) for the style and function of the music in their community creates a reflective and culturally responsive learning environment. Students are utilizing what they experience in their natural home setting and community by teaching it internationally to other people. A give and take exchange that ends with a question and answer session by all participants.

Hidalgo      This strategy of having students be in a combined role of learner and teacher has multiple benefits for their learning. By being a learner to the international educators, the students are able to gain an appreciation and understanding of global cultures that may not be able to be taught in an authentic way in traditional classroom lessons. By being a teacher of music that they experience in their own communities, the students are able to demonstrate and further their mastery of musical concepts that are found in the music that they are sharing with the international educators.

## Reflection Question 2

“How does a combination of culturally responsive teaching for and by students with inclusion of arts that are personal to their daily lives help them to retain their arts education experiences?”

DeVito The academic activities that guide the written and spoken reflection experiences in the lesson help to provide insight to this question. Students are written prompts that ask them to discuss their experiences, preferences, concerns, and key concepts learned during instruction. Students rationalize everything they are learning and comprehend the scope of it because of their documentation through journaling, discussions and critique-based assessment activities. When they are critiquing how they performed, they know how they did in relation to performing based on the accuracy of the authenticity of the culture they were learning (accentuation, style, phrasing).

In the beginning, students would play an Irish rhythm technically accurate in relation to the rhythm itself but not stylistically accurate due to the accentuation, phrasing, dynamic and “cultural feel” of the music. This is to be expected. The attempt to close this gap between technical performance and stylistic performance of music (authenticity) is continuous but not the overall purpose of the exercise.

The key purpose is to provide the students with experiences where they are learning the importance of understanding music and culture of the world around them including the geographical and social aspects of the world community in which they are included. When students share *their* culture online, it is not expected for the international educators to have a technically accurate rendition of a Hip Hop or

playground game song in the context of the culture of the Rawlings students.

The cultural exchange, communication and understanding that come by attempting to be authentic in the learning of another person's culture are important aspects of this project. Students should ask, "Was this as accurate to the authenticity of the culture of what they're learning as possible, and was their own performance of Rawlings community music accurate to the activities that they do in their community when they are performing their music? We will also be doing pre and post testing on reading fluency and comprehension assessments in year 2. The inclusion of writing through journaling of these cultural experiences creates a fine arts based academic setting. Fine arts is not Western Classical music but the genuine and authentic representation of the local music and activities defined at the beginning of the paper under culturally responsive music within in the Rawlings community.

Hidalgo The inclusion of music in the students' daily lives helps their engagement with the lessons. Through culturally responsive teaching, students are able to relate and be more comfortable with the lessons, which aids them in the understanding of the musical concepts that are in the lessons.

### **Reflection Question 3**

"Are students developing and working on skills that are musically related but not limited to music?"

DeVito Yes. There is a variety of literature from the library at Rawlings Elementary and the local libraries in the community on the history of black music and video series told through the scripts of children from the countries we are studying. For example, we have been doing swing music and we have learned how tap dance was incorporated,

both through African and Irish rhythms and dance. They are learning history and their place in the world. Because we have students who will ask questions about geography, we learn the geography of the countries. We learn a basic idea of what it is like to live in that country. We go online and see images of where we are in relation to the rest of the world for the students to compare and contrast.

Hidalgo Yes. Two music related skills that the students are working on in class are literacy and geography. Literacy is enhanced in the classroom through the learning of songs in English and in other languages. The students are able to practice their speed of reading comprehension while also expanding their vocabulary through new words found in the songs. Geography is included in the classroom through learning songs in different languages and learning about the countries that those songs originated from. Whenever a new song is introduced, the background and origin of the song is discussed through videos, pictures, and other media to help give the students an understanding of why a song may have been created.

Kuchinski Our Black History Month performance is “Motown Memories.” It is specifically the history of the Motown sound and the singers and songwriters who brought Berry Gordy's vision to the forefront of the music world. Our students research the music, people, and the social era of that time. They compare and contrast the struggles that the Motown artists faced to present day experiences that artist face today.

#### **Reflection Question 4**

“When people think of assessment and testing, they probably think of math, language arts, or standardized testing. It seems like it would be more complicated to be assessing the

impact of arts education on students. Is that true and how important has assessment become in education considering the emphasis on accountability?”

DeVito Assessment was always important in music education and it was always a part of what we do. Now, we are including approaches from a variety of fields. The students are journaling, but that is a fun activity. The students are comparing, contrasting and engaging verbally. Activities may not feel like assessment to them, but it aids in retention, memory and utilization of concepts, which are key to assessment. They will raise their hands and ask questions that relate to topics learned in previous lessons. This approach incorporates different, valid, and reliable ways of assessing how we incorporate cultural relevancy in music that is engaging for the students.

Hidalgo Assessment has always been important in music education. As in other areas of education, assessment in music education is based around standards that were created to structure the subject curriculum. Assessment in music education can appear as summative written assessments, like what is seen with standardized tests in other subjects, and also as formative assessments that happen throughout the course of a lesson. One example of a written assessment that my students are accustomed to are listening reflection sheets. With these listening reflection sheets, the students listen to one or more recordings and answer questions like “What did you hear?”, “What did you feel?”, and “Compare and contrast the recordings.” From these questions, multiple aspects of the students’ musical knowledge, like musical vocabulary and listening comprehension, can be assessed while also training their writing skills. Throughout a music lesson, there are also multiple opportunities for informal formative assessments to take place. For example, while having the students

play a game in which they need to improvise rhythms, the teacher can be observing and assessing the students' knowledge of steady beat and the target rhythm taught.

Kuchinski Our fine art students' assessment is twofold, performance assessment and pen to paper test. Just as critique is used for self and peer assessment, I use it to assess students' performance skills. Students are aware of this and since they are familiar with the process are more at ease and, I feel, perform better.

It is our goal to produce an educated audience. It is essential for students to know the language, vocabulary and techniques required for a performer to go from a student of the arts to performance ready. If we are successful at that then we are developing future supporters of the arts who will keep the arts alive and well in their communities. That is how to determine how art education affects students and that is what we are accountable to, keeping the arts alive.

Telles Assessing students in any curriculum is complex and educators have discovered that it becomes even more so when we assess students in the Fine Arts curriculum. There are a number of subjective and objective perspectives an educator must take into account. In the fine arts, you are constantly assessing and giving feedback on a minute by minute basis. It can be the conductor with his non-verbal signals as a symphony is performing or it can be the dance instructor correcting posture as the students are practicing in front of their mirror. Therefore, it is critical to give the students the proper motivation and learning growth that will enhance their ability to think deeper and apply new knowledge in all of their academics. This type of learning and growth will undoubtedly help students with what we have now come to know as the state mandated "standardized tests."

## **Conclusion**

The conclusion of the first year of this project development has provided responsive and relevant approaches to culture in the classroom. The figures demonstrated in the findings centered on the formation of the Rawlings Approach for observing and assessing student cultural responsiveness. The second year will focus on observing and assessing the formation of student cultural identity in Phase Three. The assessment methods of critique based learning, journaling, reading comprehension exercises, and end-of-year course exams combine to create individual student profiles of cultural identity through music and general education instruction (STEM and STEAM).

### **Generational Learning**

DeVito      Generational learning goes along with culturally responsive learning. I want the students to take what they do in their daily lives and bring it into the school to help in learning. By surveying parents, we have a generational relationship between past and present Rawlings community music. This increases the opportunity for parent participation and a historical application to student learning about their cultural identity. They are experts in their community; they are experts in their music and their culture. I want them to bring that into the classroom and expand on that in ways to assist them academically whether it is Hip Hop or playground games such as Hopscotch or Double Dutch jump roping chants or step dances. For parents it may have been Patti Cake games specifically while today there is an interest in adding step dances to the chants. I want them to ask their parents how many activities they remember and to teach it to the class because that creates a generational understanding of their Rawlings community.

Hidalgo This also ties into culturally relevant teaching. The inclusion of music in lessons that the students are already engaging with on the playground, at home, or in their communities helps them to comprehend musical concepts taught from that music.

Kuchinski “Motown Memories” is a great example of how cultural responsibility in education can work to draw families and parents into the education of their children. Our families share their memories with us and their children. They tell us their favorite performers, favorite songs and experiences. Our families support this performance and are our students’ best fans.

Telles There is no greater influence on a child, good or bad, than their family. Bringing positive memories to the forefront of family discussion is not only vital for the success of a child, but also for the collaborative relationship between the school and families within the community.

### **Implication for Students and Participants**

DeVito I want my classes to teach Hip Hop dancing and the music that represents their cultural identity developed in year one of this project. I want my students to have a broader sense of the world outside their community and a deeper understanding of their community sharing what they do naturally here in their own home setting in the classroom and internationally.

Hidalgo The message that I would like to make clear is that culturally relevant teaching and the integration of internationally focused lessons can have a lasting impact on students. With both, students can have a further understanding of their own home culture while also gaining an appreciation and understanding of global cultures.

Kuchinski Most importantly, I want our audience to understand that although critiques are essential for an artist's growth, critiques hone critical thinking skills. In their critiques, students not only "tell" but also explain why and give example. They are required to defend their opinion. This skill is necessary in all different scenarios students will experience now and in the future.

Telles The message I would like for everyone to walk away with is that the Fine Arts are an integral part for student learning in all aspects of life. The arts are a powerful connector for a child between the reality of life and academic learning.

Corey Collins is a full-time behavioral science practitioner at Rawlings Elementary through *CDS* Family & Behavioral Health Services and has observed the students in their performance at the ISAME7 conference. He stated,

Music performance not only builds leaders but is an amazing way to teach self-expression. The demonstration of cultural relevancy at the International Symposium on Assessment in Music Education gave students ownership of their learning, freedom to express what they know and hear and intrinsic pride through being able to bring the music and rhythms of their life to school. Dr. Devito has created a safe place where the students are only limited by their own imagination. (C. Collins, personal communication, April 17, 2019)

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