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ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR

FreshSTARTs Program

Voices of Nature and Native Americans

Appropriate for: Grades 3 - 8

Materials needed: Microphone if more than 100 students

This program meets the following Sunshine State Standards:

MU.C.1.2 Students understand music in relation to culture and history

MU.D.1.2 Students identify instruments and diverse music

MU.E.2.2 Students understand relationship of musicians and cultures

MU.B.1.2 Students participate in creating music

SS.A.3.2 Students understand US history related to Native Americans

Objectives:

Students will be able to hear the world around them with greater insight and knowledge. Students will be able to identify whether the sounds of nature they hear are primarily melodic or rhythmic. They will have a greater appreciation of indigenous peoples' relationship to the world around them. They will understand that to native cultures, all creatures and their voices are equally important and sacred in the universe. They will be able to identify some native instruments, the region from which they come, and their place in native ritual and life. They will be able to identify animals that are extinct, endangered and protected. Students will understand that they too have a voice that is important in the world. Students will have a chance to perform native words of wisdom and instruments with the artists.

Connections to Learning:

The arts experience readily connects with social studies (geography, history and culture). The arts activity connects with reading particularly of native words of wisdom and philosophies. The artists spend some time on the science of the materials used to make the instruments and the science of their sound production as well as the science of sound in nature. Teachers can use artwork supplied by the artists to discuss shapes and mathematical formulas used to create the intricate patterns.

Introduction/Background Information:

Students should have some knowledge of American Indian culture in various regions of the United States. They should have some familiarity with native peoples' relationship and respect for nature. Students should know the meaning of extinct, endangered and protected. Students should have some exposure to Native American instruments such as drums, rattles, and flutes.

Program Experience:

Entertainment: Students are drawn into the haunting sounds of drum and flute. They also are drawn into the quiet and silence inherent in the music and playing.

Exposure to new instruments: Students are intrigued by the native instruments, their history, and the stories of the respect the makers had for the materials they used from the nature around them.

Affirmation and stretching into new learning: Students can share their knowledge of native cultures and stories and learn to appreciate more deeply the relationship of the native people and nature. Students enjoy analyzing the sounds they take for granted each day and discovering they hear more sounds than they realized. Students begin to realize that native cultures not only honor the voices of nature but also have ways of communicating and listening to each other that respects each person's voice including their own. The practice (ritual) of the talking stick teaches students to reflect before speaking, to listen carefully and to think about what someone else has said, and to pause so that others may also reflect and allow thoughts to be carefully considered. The ritual of the communion drum teaches students to work as a group and to 'listen' to body language and non-verbal signals.

Additional Materials:

Teachers can play some Native American music (found in the library or on the internet) and instruct students to draw, paint or compose poetry that reflects the feelings brought about by the music. Teachers can play some Native American music and show pictures of Native artwork such as blankets and clothing, photos or paintings of Native American history, and share stories of great American Indian warriors and heroes. Teachers can use the native words of wisdom found on the artist's website for reflective activities.

Teachers can share the artwork from various regions of the country for comparison. Students can explore the different materials from each region that contributed to the colors and patterns used by the artists.

Reflection/Follow-up Activities:

How might the world be different if the Native respect for nature was more a part of our society? Are there activities we each can perform that would preserve or foster a better relationship to nature? Where are there other indigenous cultures that we can compare to Native American culture? What sounds of nature are in danger of disappearing now? What can we do preserve the natural world? How do Native American writings and poetry reflect their relationship to nature?

Assessment:

Teachers can observe participation during the program. Teachers can assess the students' grasp of the concepts during activities such as the communion drum circle and the talking stick. Teachers can use the Inventory of Learning provided by the artists. The teacher can create a talking stick culture in the classroom and allow students to reflect upon the experience in individual or small group journals.