Ariel Flinn Engaged Learning Project

Title of Project: You're the Composer!

Subject(s): General Music

Grade Level(s): 5th Grade

Abstract:

Using professional music notation software called Finale, students will compose an original piece of music using quarter notes, paired eighth notes, beamed sixteenth notes, half notes, and quarter rests in the pentatonic scale in either 3/4 or 4/4 time. A final step in the process will be when each student combines his/her composition with another student in the class to create a form of their choice (AABB, ABA, ABBA). The file containing this combination of the two students' compositions will be duplicated so that each student may have a copy of the file. At this point, students will use their 5th grade writing skills to create poems about their individual genealogies or cultural backgrounds with a rhyming scheme that matches the form of their own compositions. The students will use the lyrics tool in the Finale software to insert their individual poems into their compositions.

Upon completion, the students will publish their compositions to the Finale Showcase where others can see and comment on their compositions. Additionally, students can convert their Finale files to MIDI file format, which can be recorded in a podcast that can be published in iTunes as well as on a class website. Students may choose to enter their compositions into the statewide Georgia Music Educators Association (GMEA) Composition Contest (Elementary Division). Selected compositions will be performed at the annual In-Service Conference. In order to enter this contest, the teacher must be a registered member of GMEA. The student must submit a musical score as well as a recording of the composition. A MP3 recording created from a MIDI file is an acceptable recording format to satisfy this requirement.

Twice during composition process (at the beginning and near the end), students will write a series of questions for a professional composer and then engage in Skype video conferencing with an Atlanta Symphony Orchestra composer-in-residence. The purpose of this collaboration will be to find out what processes are involved in composition, how to get started on a composition, how or why the composer chooses particular rhythms, melodies, dynamics, etc., how the composer's personal experiences (e.g., cultural background) affect his/her composition, what type of composition software the composer uses, etc.

Learner Description/Context:

This project is aimed for 5th grade/upper elementary students. Music class takes place once a week for 45 minutes for all classes.

Most of the project will take place during visits to the computer lab. The computer lab is large enough to facilitate one class at a time, so students will be going in during their regular music class time. There is a projector in the computer lab for the teacher to demonstrate and explain the software to the students. Each computer is outfitted with a pair of headphones for the students to hear their compositions as they go.

The video conferencing days will take place in the Music room during regularly scheduled Music classes spread out across one week. There is more than one composer-in-residence available. So, instead of overwhelming or exhausting the same composer for all classes, students will be collaborating with different composers (representing different cultural backgrounds) depending on the day a given class comes to Music. However, each particular class will use the same composer at both stages.

The school's student population consists of students from the following cultural backgrounds: 53% White, 30% Asian, 9% Black/African American, 5% Hispanic, 4% Two or More Races. There is some attrition through the year, although this is not a major problem in the school.

The school features two self-contained Autism classes (one K-2nd class and one 3rd-5th class with 1-2 5th graders in the class). These students attend Specials with a particular class in the same grade level, but an instructional paraprofessional ("parapro") joins them in these classes. There are also students with special needs who attend pullout classes but are ultimately part of the general education classroom.

Time Frame:

At the end of each unit (rhythm, melody, harmony, expression, form), students will go to the computer lab to add on to their compositions as a sort of summative assessment for that unit. This will occur every six weeks or so throughout the year. One day will be spent at the very beginning going over the software and allowing the students to explore online tutorials for the software. Two days will be set aside for videoconferencing with a professional composer. If students miss a day in the computer lab, if they need more time, or of they need remediation at any point, they will have two options:

a. Students may choose to schedule time with the Music teacher during their lunch and/or recess time to make up the assignment (this is a common practice in the school as the Specials teachers' planning time overlaps with lunch and 5th grade recess), or
b. Students can choose to work on their project at home. There is a free version of the software called Finale Notepad that students may choose to download at home. In this case, students will obtain a copy of the file to bring home (e.g., put the file on a flash drive), complete the particular assignment at home, and bring the file back to school.

Standards Assessed:

Fulton County Standards for 5th Grade General Music:

M5GM.3b: Notate rhythmic patterns including the use of eighth notes, quarter notes, quarter rests, tied quarter notes, dotted quarter notes, half notes, half rests, beamed sixteenth notes, dotted half notes, whole notes, and whole rests in response to teacher performance.

M5GM.3d: Notate simple melodies within a treble clef staff.

M5GM.5b: Create simple songs using any of the following: quarter notes, quarter rests, eighth notes, beamed sixteenth notes, half notes, dotted half notes, whole notes, or text within an octave scale using simple meter.

M5GM.5c: Arrange rhythmic and melodic patterns creating simple form, instrumentation, and various styles.

M5GM.6a: Distinguish between repeating and contrasting sections, phrases, and simple formal structures – AB, ABA, AABA, rondo, theme and variation, introduction and coda.

M5GM.8c: Describe career opportunities in the field of music.

ISTE NETS-S:

1. Creativity and Innovation: Students demonstrate creative thinking, construct knowledge, and develop innovative products and processes using technology

- **1a:** Apply existing knowledge to generate new ideas, products, or processes
- **1b**: Create original works as a means of personal or group expression

2. Communication and Collaboration: Students use digital media and environments to communicate and work collaboratively, including at a distance, to support individual learning and contribute to the learning of others

- **2a**: Interact, collaborate, and publish with peers, experts, or others employing a variety of digital environments and media
- **2b**: Communicate information and ideas effectively to multiple audiences using a variety of media and formats

3. Research and Information Fluency: Students apply digital tools to gather, evaluate, and use information

- **3a**: Plan strategies to guide inquiry

5. Digital Citizenship: Students understand human, cultural, and societal issues related to technology and practice legal and ethical behavior

- **5b**: Exhibit a positive attitude toward using technology that supports collaboration, learning, and productivity

6. Technology Operations and Concepts: Students demonstrate a sound understanding of technology concepts, systems, and operations

- **6a**: Understand and use technology systems
- **6d**: Transfer current knowledge to learning

Learner Objectives:

As a result of this project, students will be able to create a composition featuring the musical elements of rhythm, melody, harmony, expression, and form according to Fulton County standards. Additionally, students will be aware of how to use Music composition software to compose original music.

The "Hook" or Introduction:

In the beginning of the year, students will be told about the project and shown student samples from previous years. The teacher will demonstrate the software on the interactive whiteboard and allow students to come to the board to experiment with using the software before they first go to the computer lab. The main hook will be the primary Skype videoconference with a professional composer.

Process:

The process involves several days in the computer lab throughout the year. At the end of each unit, the class will go to the computer lab to add on to their composition. Before the students go to the computers, the teacher will demonstrate the next step, point out new uses/tools of the software necessary for that unit, describe the assignment for that portion of the composition, and take student questions. Students will then be sent to computers. A seating arrangement will be created to minimize social distractions while also allowing for higher achieving students to be placed next to or near lower performing students who may benefit from peer assistance. If students have questions, they will be encouraged to ask a neighbor first, then raise their hand for teacher assistance if peers were unable to solve the problem. Additionally, "cheat sheets" (visual aids) and other accommodations will be available to students with special needs as prescribed by their IEPs. Autism students will be seated together with equal access to the assistance of the instructional parapro. Meanwhile, the teacher will walk around the computer lab to supervise student progress, give assistance as needed, and respond to individual questions. Students will print their work at the end of each session for teacher review. The teacher will make comments and circle "mistakes" (according to the unit assignment guidelines, e.g. only use pitches from the pentatonic scale) on these printed copies after each visit to the computer lab. These printed copies are then added to the student's composition portfolio. These portfolios are handed back to the students each time they return to the computer lab so that they may make any necessary changes before moving on to the next step, and ultimately given to the student upon the completion of the project. The implementation steps are as follows:

(Note: the individual steps described are referred to as "Days", e.g. Day 1, Day 2, etc. However, these days will not be consecutive. Instead, these days will be spread out across the entire school year according to the unit instructional calendar. Each of these days will occur during a given class's day in Music in a given week.)

Day 1: Students are introduced to the project, shown student samples from previous years, and given a brief introduction to the software on the interactive whiteboard. Students create questions for the composer, which the teacher will approve before the first videoconference.

Day 2: Students engage in a Skype videoconference with a professional composer to gain insights into the composition process.

Day 3: Students go to the computer lab and watch a brief demonstration on how to access tutorials for the software. Then, students go to individual computers and explore software tutorials based on their own interests.

Day 4: At the end of the rhythm unit, students go to the computer lab to create rhythmic compositions using quarter notes, paired eighth notes, beamed sixteenth notes, half notes, and quarter rests. Through the unit, students will have gained an understanding of how to read and write these rhythms.

Day 5: At the end of the melody unit, students go to the computer lab to add melody to their compositions, specifically using pitches within the pentatonic scale. Through the unit, students will have gained an understanding of how to read and write these pitches.

Day 6: At the end of the harmony unit, students go to the computer lab to add harmony to their compositions, specifically using pitches within the pentatonic scale. Through the unit, students will have gained an understanding of how harmony is created using other pentatonic pitches and why those specific pitches are used instead of diatonic pitches for the purpose of creating harmony in a 5th grade context.

Day 7: At the end of the expression unit, students go to the computer lab to add dynamics, tempos, and articulations to their compositions. Through the unit, students will have gained an understanding of how to read and write these expressive elements.

Day 8: At the end of the form unit, students identify a partner and decide on a form for their compositions. Then, students combine their compositions to create this form. Through the unit, students will have gained an understanding of various musical forms.

Day 9: Students write their poems individually to match the rhyming scheme to the form.

Day 10: Students return to the computer lab to add their poem to their compositions. Students will duplicate the file from their partner, then use the lyrics tool to add their poems to their compositions.

Day 11: Having gained insights into the compositional process, students once again videoconference with the same professional composer to ask follow-up questions that they have created (and that the teacher has approved).

Day 12: Students return to the computer lab to make any final changes to their compositions and convert their composition to MIDI file format. The students then access the shared file folder to listen to each other's compositions. They also upload their compositions to the Finale Showcase to share with others worldwide.

Day 13: Students narrate and record podcasts that include their MIDI files and a description of the composition experience. The students upload their podcasts onto the class website and iTunes.

Product:

The end product for this project is a composition created entirely by the student using professional composition software. Other composers will have access to the product through the Finale Showcase as well as the podcasts that will be available publicly. Students from other schools may want to access these compositions to guide their own projects. Students will have the opportunity to enter their compositions into a statewide competition. In addition to unit-by-unit assessment of student work, a final assessment of the entire project will be completed using the composition rubric (attached). In the case that students move out of district before the end of the year, they will be given their composition portfolios to that point as well as guidelines to complete the composition on their own. In the case that students move into the district after the project has already begun, they will be given a sample composition (created by the teacher) with all the steps to that point already completed, into which the new students can add on the succeeding material.

Technology Use:

Many different types of technology will be used during this project. First, the students and the teacher will use the interactive whiteboard to give students preliminary exposure and experimentation with the composition software. Each class will use Skype to collaborate with a professional composer. Students will use online tutorials to prepare to use the software. Students will use professional music composition software (Finale) to compose their pieces of music. Students will create MIDI files for sharing purposes. Students will create podcasts using Audacity for sharing purposes. Students will use iTunes to publish the podcasts. The main indicators of Engaged Learning supported through these uses of technology are student-directed and authentic learning experiences and the role of student-producer. Each step of the project is student-directed, from the creation

of questions for the composer, to the choice of tutorial used, to the actual product(s) created. Additionally, this project is very authentic because they will be creating a professional-grade product that can be accessed by millions of people worldwide. Lastly, the project results in students creating a product that can be of real use to the composer and others.

References and Supporting Material:

Finale Tutorials: http://www.finalemusic.com/UserManuals/Finale2012Win/Content/Finale/Finale_Tutorials.htm

Skype video conferencing: http://www.skype.com/en/

GMEA website for composition contest: http://www.gmea.org

Applications:
Finale composition software (to produce the composition)
Finale tutorials (to learn how to use the software)
Skype (to videoconference with a professional composer)
Audacity (to create podcasts)
iTunes (to publish podcasts)

See attached composition rubric.