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SCED 550: The Arts in STEM

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Art Integration Paper

Art Form

I am choosing to use musical composition as my selected art form. For this lesson, I am going to task students to create an original or parody song and video about a period of geologic time. It is my hope that with a relatively open-ended assignment like this that it will set the stage for students to learn and explore our Earth's history, and also practice conveying information and engaging an audience through their production.

Lesson Enhancement

The lesson in which I am applying this art form ordinarily requires students to write a 2-3 page paper on a period of geologic time. My students do not like long writing assignments and I always receive push back from them. I give writing assignments in my classroom because it is very important that students are able to write and communicate effectively. Nevertheless I am open to allowing students to delve into the incredible history of our Earth through the lens of music. Having this creative opportunity, especially with group work, I believe will give students that would normally loathe a formal writing assignment the freedom to express themselves and

learn at the same time. Additionally, having an engaging medium to convey their newfound knowledge will make it easier for more students to learn via the research of their peers.

I really enjoy enhancing my lessons with art components. However, I do not always include opportunities for artistic expression within my lessons or assignments. My reservations for including art elements primarily centers on the dilemma of the amount of time spent on those assignments versus an assignment which focuses only on content. For example, I recently completed a unit on genetics and one of our assignments was supposed to help students practice punnett squares and further their understanding of inheritance. The assignment had them draw a monster whose characteristics were selected through genetic recombination of two parent monsters using punnett squares and virtual die to simulate randomization. Return on the assignment was poor. The students who completed the assignment did an excellent job, but for three class days spent, I think I could have accomplished our objective in a more efficient way. With all that being said, as an avid music lover I am looking forward to the chance to have my students experiment with writing lyrics, performing music and showing their creative sides.

Interdisciplinary Context

The beauty in the appeal of music is that it is incredibly diverse and provides so many avenues for creative expression. With regard to facilitating class discussion, art which can be enjoyed collectively I think has a good place in the classroom. Hopefully, by seeing their classmates express their knowledge through music it will prompt them to think more about the scientific concepts which we have covered in class. Perhaps after watching/listening to a classmate's

composition they can engage in dialogue like “What did you mean by that line?” just as we do with recreational music.

Music composition presents many pathways to weave together multiple content areas within a single assignment. An example of a crossover project that I have seen involves the production of a PSA about a specific environmental issue (climate change, water scarcity, deforestation etc.). A project like that can incorporate both aspects of science like the researching peer-reviewed background information and social studies concepts like the importance of public activism. Good PSAs are memorable and, like the jingle from your favorite commercial, can be made more memorable through the inclusion of music. Overall, I believe the universal language of music can be used to facilitate engagement and promote understanding across topics in more ways than other art forms are able.