

Final Report

2) Project Leader: Leslie Timmons

3) Project Title: U-SING, Utah - Singing Instruction for a New Generation

4) Project Duration: June 1, 2016 - May 30, 2017

5) Budget Request: \$9,831; ~ \$5500 expended

6) Project Summary:

U-SING is a pilot program to support skill development in group community singing by providing professional development training for adults who work with groups of children. Activities that address appropriate child voice range, engaging teaching strategies, vocal health, and suitable repertoire are modeled by 3rd-5th grade students who participate in Cache Children's Choir (CCC) in weekly rehearsals on the Logan campus. Vocal concepts are presented in six sessions in Discover 4-H Club template format. Materials include a written description of each activity with supporting video clip and are available electronically in Google Docs.

7) Project Results:

- Collaboration

At the onset of the project Claudia Bigler was the newly appointed Artistic Director of Cache Children's Choir and was meeting children for only the second week of instruction when we began videotaping portions of elementary and middle school aged classes. We worked together to outline the curriculum in advance but the actual teaching and presentation was done by Claudia or other staff members under her direction.

Dr. Cory Evans, Director of Choral Activities at USU, used this project for elementary level observations for university music majors enrolled in a Choral Methods course.

The Beverley Taylor Sorenson Arts Learning Program (BTSALP), administered through the Office of the Utah State Board of Education, has a network of regional partners and faculty at six other institutions across the state to support elementary arts education. Part of their mission is to provide professional development for elementary teachers and U-SING was recommended for music specialists and other educators across Utah, especially in rural areas of the state. In at least one district, the Instructional Coaches used U-SING material to mentor paraprofessionals at multiple school sites.

Ryan Christensen, Media Specialist in USU Media Productions, provided videography expertise and an employee who recorded audio/video at weekly rehearsals. That office also shepherded me through learning to download and edit material in preparation for private YouTube posting.

Utah Chapter, American Orff-Schulwerk Association, a professional music and movement education group, recruited participants by distributing U-SING information to its members.

Aurora Villa, District Arts Coordinator for Cache County School Districts encouraged her paraprofessional teachers to take the pilot U-SING. Three paraprofessionals and one highly qualified music teacher in the district completed the project. All identified specific activities that informed their teaching at multiple levels.

- Outcomes, outputs, impacts

Outputs

Six sessions of multiple activities available in Google Docs.

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0BwkX2ckCMEhTc25DcGFZTHprUDQ>

Each session presents 5-11 concepts (48 in total) with text explanation including music notation and/or images with supporting video for each strategy for teaching singing concepts and repertoire to children.

Outcomes

- Twenty-three people enrolled including both paraprofessional and licensed elementary music specialists in public and charter schools as well as church musicians from Utah and Idaho.
- Fourteen individuals made and submitted baseline video recordings of their target group, and then accessed and completed the first session (of six sessions.)
- Every participant accessed U-SING electronically even if they resided in close proximity to campus where they could have observed live instruction.
- Video editing was a critical component of putting the project material in 4-H Discover format but not factored into the budget.
- Every participant expressed ease of accessing material, preparing to teach concepts, and success with implementing it in their teaching.
- Regular written reflection on all aspects of the preparation and teaching of each session was required as a means of assessment. Most admitted that it had not been a regular practice but have now adopted it as a tool to inform their teaching.
- Because of their limited contact time with students and because of other curricular demands (seasonal program preparation), most participants found that each of the six sessions of U-SING would take more than one class lesson to cover the content adequately. This also discouraged some individuals from participating in the timeframe of this grant.
- Every participant stated that it was immensely helpful to see a master teacher working with real students, unrehearsed, in a classroom environment.
- Ten individuals completed all six sessions, wrote a final reflection, and solicited and submitted student feedback and a “post” video to demonstrate progress.

Impacts

Participants unanimously expressed that they had gained an enhanced knowledge of teaching group singing skills to elementary aged children. This was evidenced in written reflection and video documentation submissions.

Approximately three hundred students who participated in target groups expressed a new or increased appreciation for one or more skills that support healthy, artistic singing.

Although they were asked to provide feedback on one target group, most participants mentioned that they were able to adapt and apply the concepts to their teaching of younger and older students.

- Efforts/plans to secure extramural funds

Art Works for Kids, a private Utah foundation dedicated to supporting arts education projects, will be approached for a sequential project. The organization accepts grant requests by invitation only but is committed to developing and sharing electronic resources with all entities including home school, charter and schools in rural areas of the state. Art Works for Kids has funded three years of a pending Extension position in the Caine College of the Arts as a means of extending the impact of the BTSALP across the state. U-SING and similar programs will provide models for professional development in the arts to rural areas.

8. Efforts/plans to produce, publish, and disseminate scholarly material:

U-SING was presented in a session at the Utah Music Educators Association (UMEA) Mid-Winter Conference in St. George UT on February 3, 2017. Advertised in the professional journal, it attracted approximately seventy-five music educators whose primary assignments are in K-12 schools. Teachers with an instrumental background who are assigned to choral classes at all levels were particularly interested.

U-SING was presented at the U.S.U. Extension conference on the Logan campus on March 1, 2017.

When U-SING is available online as a 4H-Discover club, I will submit articles to the UMEA professional journal and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME) to encourage members to access the content. The program merited an invitation from NAfME to publish a podcast about creating and distributing professional development in music via electronic media.

Thank you for your generous support of this pilot project. Knowing that singing is a “learned art” that virtually anyone can master, this project is an important step towards nurturing the skill of singing and making it more accessible for every child.