

5/14/10

Dear Friends of Blues in the Schools programs,

I just recently completed a Blues In The Schools residency for three school levels (elementary/middle/high schools) on Lopez Island in the San Juan Islands of Washington state.

The residency consisted of my "Blues Had A Baby And They Called It Rock and Roll" all-school blues history assembly for all three 'age groups,' as well as a cross curriculum session in the middle school Literacy class (formerly known as 'English class') on the topic of skills in poetry and blues lyric writing.

In the Literacy class, with my aid and encouragement, collaborated as a group on creating a school blues song. The song was completed in less than 30 minutes. The entire session was about 45 minutes long. The lyrics are below in this message. In my instructions about composing the song, I asked the students to share with others, through their poetry/song, what makes their school 'special,' unique, and fun.

This is always fun and sometimes quite surprising. The school has a wonderful vegetable garden that all students help to tend, and the veggie crops are harvested and prepared for the students to eat as part of their noon/lunchtime meal. The reference to the 'chicken bucket' in the song is in regard to the fact that in the cafeteria there is a large plastic bucket into which all compostable food scraps are required to be placed upon the students finishing their meals. They call it the 'chicken bucket,' and all of the food scraps go to help compost their garden. Very special, and very unique, and quite an interesting aspect that they wanted to include as a verse in their school blues song.

This is about creativity, self-expression, empowerment, and self-esteem. The students are always pleasantly surprised at the positive results from what is usually their first effort to write a poem or song, as a group or as individuals. The lyrics they have written are not necessarily 'earth shattering' or 'highly profound,' but the lyrics are 'owned' by the students and reflect who they are in a positive and creative manner. They have successfully expressed themselves creatively through art. They are empowered and by the experience.

My residency was sponsored by Dean and Carolyn Jacobsen of the Lopez School Music Advocacy Foundation and the Washington Blues Society. The Jacobsen's just sent me the quotes below in this message from Lopez Island school teachers in regard to this residency.

Also of note, for the past three years the Lopez Island School history teacher, Kurt Jacobs, has been using the book/CD anthology, "Up The Mississippi/A Journey of the Blues," which was produced/published by the Miss. Valley Blues Society in Davenport, IA, as a teaching aid in his history classes. The Lopez School Music Advocacy Foundation (the Jacobsen's) order copies of the book/CD from the Miss. Valley Blues Society for all of Mr. Jacobs' history students each year. For information about the book/CD:

<http://mvbs.org/education-news/education-news/up-the-mississippi-%11-a-journey-of-the-blues-anthology%10cd-project>

"Cross curriculum" work is very effective and important. At the end of this message you will find some of the cross curriculum concepts/classes that I have available. I encourage you to explore the opportunities and alternatives that exist in this area of education ... not just as presented by me, but by other blues educators, as well.

Thanks so much for your time, support, and thoughtful consideration.

Cheers and Best Wishes,

Hawkeye

Three rather nice quotes from Lopez school forwarded to me by;
Dean and Carolyn Jacobsen
Lopez School Music Advocacy Foundation
PO Box 301
Lopez Island, WA 98261
360.468.2240
www.livemusiconlopez.com

"Hawkeye's songwriting session provided students with an invaluable experience on how to incorporate themes and vocabulary into a musical piece. I'm excited to add this element into future literacy sessions." - Colleen Currie/Lopez Island Middle School

"Teaching about the history and composition of Blues music is not a class usually seen in schools prior to college. On the other hand, few, if any, people can bring the topic to life better than Hawkeye Herman. Blues can be added to the curriculum in any class from math to history, but is particularly applicable to the class I teach--United States History. Hawkeye has been a musician all his life and his love of life, people, and especially Blues music shows when he takes the stage to explain his music. Few people can captivate an audience of any age like Hawkeye, and if you can lure him to your school for a presentation, you will not regret it." - Kurt Jacobs Lopez Island High School

"Hawkeye had out kids engaged and learning about history through music...they are still singing "the blues had a baby and called it rock and roll"! - Marc Vermeire, Secondary Principal Lopez Island School District

The Chicken Bucket Blues
by
the Lopez Island Middle School students - Lopez Island, WA
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We are the Lobos from Lopez Island School (x2)
Where the teachers are ancient and the students are so cool

Lopez school colors are maroon and gold - (x2)
Our sports teams are hot and our spirits are so bold

'Daisy' is our helpful school service dog - (x2)
(You know that) When we are lost, she guides through the fog

The chicken bucket, that's where we throw our scraps of food (x2)
It's compost for our garden that makes it grow so good

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Where the teachers are ancient and the students are so cool

In regard to cross curriculum concepts/possibilities ... here's a general list of what I have available beyond my "Blues Had A Baby" assembly/program and the blues songwriting clinic that you've already witnessed:

Blues In The Schools cross curriculum work/classes for all age levels in;

A. Geography - many blues songs are 'geographically based' with many geographical references and geographical descriptions within the lyrics.

B. Social Studies - blues music was initially used as a 'release' from the oppression and disenfranchisement experienced by African Americans.

C. History - blues music is the depository for African American history and experience

D. Art - blues music to evoke creative thinking and conception of other art forms

E. Drama/Theater - blues music can evoke and effect the 'reading of text' and production

F. English/literacy -- poetry and songwriting

G. Chorus and singing -- technique and choral arrangement classes.

H. Band - teaching blues to young musicians ... not just on the guitar, but for all instruments, I teach blues playing and music arrangement to band classes of all ages.

I. And my popular 'make your own instruments out of household items' program for elem. school students. if you want to see something really heartwarming and smile provoking, please look at this very brief video done at an elem. school in Peoria, IL this past Feb Snippets from a "Make your own blues instruments" presentation, This is really a hit with the children:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QACNBIPYKEw>

Hawkeye "Blues In The Schoos" residency at Lopez Island School
May, 2010 - Lopez Island, WA





Hawkeye and Jim DiIanni of the Washington Blues Society with Lopez Island School students checking out the latest edition of the Washington Blues Society's Blues Letter magazine. May, 2010 - Lopez Island, WA