THE PROJECT

When adolescents are engaged in learning, research has shown a decrease in alcohol and drug use, higher retention rates and fewer failures throughout high school, lower rates of depression as well as lower rates of anti-social and criminal behaviours. Attention to student engagement with a priority on 21st century learning skills requires the examination of various pedagogies, including using informal learning practices as the foundation for instruction with adolescents in schools.

This pilot project targets Grade 7 to 10 students in two school settings where adolescent engagement is a priority. It examines the viability of implementing informal learning practices within the Canadian context.

To introduce informal music pedagogy (IMP), researchers are retraining three teachers; collaborating with teachers in lesson planning, observing and evaluating the effects of the relation to learning outcomes over a four-month period. Data gathered through interviews with students, teachers and school administrators; audio-video recording; and observation are being analysed to measure outcomes before engaging in a large scale Canadian research project.

The evaluation of IMP in Ontario schools has the potential to challenge current instructional methods, teachers' preconception programming and will address adolescent engagement and success in learning, using music as the foundation of the model. Pedagogies that reach more students through music should enable youth to see connections among school, daily life, and their future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

If adolescents won’t learn the way we teach, can we teach the way they learn? Musical Futures Canada, building on the results of MuFuUK, believes learning works best when young people are making music, & when their passion for making music is reflected in the classroom. MuFu is an approach to teaching & learning that effectively utilizes the Creative Process in Arts Education (Ontario MOE). It is a new way of thinking about music making in schools that brings non-formal teaching & informal learning approaches into the formal context of schools. Research indicates that MuFu increases student motivation school students participation; become more music making enthused disinterested; students to (particular leadership independent). Enables demonstrate potential; progression behaviour, focus & attendance & has a positive impact on students’ attitudes towards music in school. Improves performance skills & develops student understanding of a range of musical genres; increases numbers of students electing to continue with music making outside the classroom. Has sustainable impact on teachers own practices & changes the way teachers teach. A documentary film, and journal articles including key data and findings, will be produced for research and dissemination.

WHAT IS MUSICAL FUTURES CANADA?

There has been much debate within the academic community regarding the various types of learning that are effective for student engagement, including formal, non-formal and informal learning. The latter in relation to this project represents non-linear, cooperative learning, controlled by a social group rather than by an individual (Feichas, 2010). Informal learning can also be understood as an immersion in intense situations of non-formal learning, which creates non-traditional social learning environments that combine interactive and self-directed processes (Wright & Kanellopoulos, 2010). Informal learning is thus translated into a pedagogy by locating the production and development of musical knowledge with students themselves (Vygotsky, 1978). Children develop informal concepts outside of school that can often be related to academic knowledge obtained in school. This knowledge can serve as a scaffold for what is taught in school (Vygotsky, 1978) in order to take learning in classrooms to the next level. The concern for educators is that the majority of the population around the world is involved in musicking activities largely through listening and playing, however, the majority of the populace in the school environment is not participating in music education. Research indicates that a number of students do not see a connection between music in the ‘real world’ and school music and therefore choose to exclude themselves in this area (Green, 2008). This is the same for teachers who have been immersed in the traditional, formal canon of teaching music, expresses anxiety about bringing popular culture music into their classrooms and adopting informal methods and losing control of the classroom setting (Beynon, 2012). This study has the potential to impact the current base in teacher education programming for music educators.

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

OUTCOMES

Implications for:  
- Preservice education & teacher re-education  
- Student learning and engagement in music education  
- Student learning and engagement in other school subjects 
- Impact on student engagement with disaffected youth

REFERENCES

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- Research questions and from the program as it unfolds.

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