

North Klondyke Highway Music Society

Song Writing with Steve Slade

Teacher's Guide

October 24, 2008

We have started our fourth year of song writing and music with Steve Slade. Imagine that! Well over 100 songs have been written with students and day care children in Carmacks, Pelly Crossing, Mayo and Dawson City.

The CD “Learn by Heart - Songs from the North Klondyke Highway Schools” has reached almost every family in these four communities. Response to the CD has been overwhelmingly positive.

The purpose of this guide is to help keep the song writing project fresh and vibrant. We hope the information helps teachers (and others) prepare and implement the song writing program. We also want to ensure that the specific needs of each community can be addressed.

Thanks for being a part of the song writing program. We welcome your feedback, stories and idea.

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Role of Song Writing

Why do we think song writing is important? There are four key reasons:

1. Foster creativity and expression --- we want students to develop a strong sense of their own creativity and skills to express ideas.
2. Music education – we want students to have access to some music education (formal or informal) so that music is a part of their lives. The song writing project also meets the elementary music outcomes for the BC/Yukon Curriculum.
3. Community and family participation – songs and music help 'take the school home' and bring the community into the school. Whether it's a CD going home or a public concert, music helps foster a healthy school-family-community partnership.
4. Curriculum delivery and literacy – songs that relate directly to curriculum helps students reach course outcomes. Deep learning takes place through the song writing process. Singing helps retain knowledge. Perhaps most important, the process of writing and singing give real meaning to the importance of reading and writing.

What To Do?

We recommend the four song writing projects described below. These all work well with any age group and in the time allotments most schools use (40 – 80 minutes per session). Steve has developed a very successful methodology using these projects.

Curriculum Based Songs

These are songs that fit within one of your courses. Some examples from the CD are:

1. Little Brown Bat --- science about the brown bat that lives near Dawson City.
2. Salmon Song – traditions and science about King Salmon
3. Bermuda Triangle – history and geography of the Bermuda Triangle.
4. Near Pelly – animals and nature around the Pelly Community

Songs ideas are as diverse and rich as the curriculum. Any subject area can work including Math, Science and Language Arts.

Songs with Aboriginal and French Language

Kids love to create songs that include words from languages other than English. Two examples from the CD are:

1. Mahsi Cho Jejik
2. L'hiver Yukonaise/Yukon Winter

Writing songs helps students understand the language and singing the songs helps retain the language.

Songs about Traditions

There are a lot of songs about Christmas and Hallowe'en! "Coming Home" and "Christmas is Coming" are on the CD as well as "Valentine's Day (Shout it Out)". These songs work well in conjunction with seasonal concerts. These songs also help students understand new traditions from local cultures or around the world.

Songs About Anything!

Songs based on fun or cool ideas are important, too. The CD has:

1. A lullaby
2. A teenage love song
3. Songs about community life

Students really develop their self esteem and resilience for expressing themselves in a positive way when they can write and perform their own songs based on their own ideas.

Working with Steve – Prep, Sing and Report

Here are five things that Steve recommends teacher do to help him prepare for your classes.

1. Confirm date and time via e-mail. This can be done individually or through the school's main contact.
2. Determine which topic/project you want to work on and let Steve know via e-mail. It's very helpful to know this in advance.
3. Brainstorm song words with your class before Steve's visit. This helps students get ready for the creative part. If you can, e-mail the words to Steve before his visit.

4. Between visits, sing songs with your students, particularly the songs on the CD. Singing takes practice and we get better and better with each time we sing.
5. Let us know how you and your students are doing. We love to get feedback from both students and teachers. This keeps the project fresh. It also helps us market the program to our funding agencies. (Check out the website for feedback from BC, Alberta and Germany!)

Yes – There's More Ideas

Here are some ideas that you may want to consider for your school:

1. Mayo has asked Steve to help with their choir and Christmas concert.
2. Dawson has asked Steve to help with their choir and high school rock band.
3. Dawson has an Enriched French program and Steve is helping the teachers write French songs.
4. Students already know songs in Northern Tutchone and Han. Could we do some recording in Native Languages?
5. We will create a song sharing web site this year. We hope students will share their own songs. The intent is to foster interest in self-directed song writing.

Mahsi Cho/Massi Cho/Merci/Thanks

We really appreciate your interest in the song writing program. Please contact us with your ideas, suggestions and feedback.