

ACCESS, EQUITY AND INCLUSION

Access, Equity and Inclusion: Crafting a Curriculum at The Bradley Elementary School

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Teaching Context

This project is structured around teaching at The Bradley Elementary School located in East Boston Massachusetts. The Bradley is part of the the Boston Public School District and serves approximately 300 students, from grades Pre-K-5 (Bradley, 2021). The Bradley's mission is "to provide a safe, motivating, and inquiry-driven learning environment with high expectations for all students" (Bradley, 2021). The Bradley prides itself on being a school where students feel comfortable in their learning space and have access to all of the tools and resources that they need to thrive. The Bradley focuses on having classrooms that use methods of teaching that empower the students by excelling in student-centered learning approaches. They make an effort by focusing on oral language development while being aware of the students various backgrounds (Bradley, 2021). The students at the Bradley come from many diverse backgrounds, and English is a second language for many of the students. This makes sense when taking a look at the student demographics from the Boston Public School Districts' information gathered from 2018-2019.

Based off of the information from the BPS website, the student population was 42.5% Hispanic, 33% Black, 14% White, 9% Asian and 1.5% Other/Multiracial. Out of these students, 45% have a first language that is not English, 32% are English learners, 21% are students with disabilities (IEP) and 7% are English learners with disabilities, and 72% are economically disadvantaged. Meaning that the majority of these students are participating in one or more of the following state administered programs: SNAP, TAFDC, DCF foster care, and MassHealth (BPS, 2019). The Bradley is considerate to the student demographic and aims to create an environment

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where the students feel welcomed, by having staff members who are aware of the students and communities that they serve. The teachers at The Bradley are expected to create spaces where the student voice is at the heart of the learning. Teachers are expected to develop a deeper understanding of the students whom they serve (Bradley, 2021). The teachers and administration are aware of their students and embrace the language-rich community, in which the students are held to high expectations. The Bradley wants to motivate their students to think critically by building on one another's ideas by being confident and courageous Bradley citizens (Bradley, 2021).

What does it mean to be a Bradley citizen? According to the website a, Bradley Citizen is based off of three grounding principles: to be Courageous, to be Confident and be a B.E.A.R. What does being a B.E.A.R mean? Not only is the school's mascot a brown bear but B.E.A.R means to do your personal: **B**est, **E**ngage in Learning, **A**ct Responsibly, **R**espect Everyone and **S**afely-Work & Play (Bradley, 2021). The Bradley wants to make sure that they are holding their students up to high expectations as well as creating an uplifting and safe environment. The Bradley prides itself on celebrating the East Boston community's rich cultural and linguistic diversity. Over sixty percent of the students at The Bradley speak a first language that is not English. The Bradley provides a safe, motivating, and inquiry-driven learning environment where students have access to a minimum of five enrichment courses every week that include the subjects of technology, Japanese, music, art, physical education and science (Bradley, 2021). The Bradley is able to provide this to the students by working with the community and partnerships.

What are partnerships and how do they benefit the students? The Bradley does not have

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the facility or funds to provide all of these enrichment programs through their own staff and faculty. This is where the partnerships are involved. The Bradley works with community partners such as Zumix Music, The Boston Ballet, 'e' Inc Environmental Sciences, Harvard University Civics, and the Walker Community Counseling to provide more opportunities for their students (Bradley, 2021). The Bradley is aware of the issues of equity and access surrounding education, and want to find ways to best support their students by providing opportunities to programs they would not have access to at other schools located in East Boston.

The Bradley cares about their students and that is evident in their mission statement as well as in their expectations for faculty and administration. Yet, what does this look like from a non-biased view when taking a look at the direct statistics at The Bradley. In a survey conducted by the website 'GreatSchools.org' there is more information that breaks down The Bradley's student demographic in academics, equity and environment. In a score out of ten, The Bradley scored a seven. Overall, The Bradley is rated above average in school quality compared to other schools in Massachusetts. The students at The Bradley are also above average in year-over-year academic improvement. Which is a testament to how The Bradley is serving its students who are disadvantaged compared to students from other areas (Great Schools, 2021). The Bradley's student demographic: 52% Hispanic, 35% White, 6% Asian, 4% Black, 2% multiracial and 1% are Native American and Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islanders (Great Schools, 2021). Which is very similar to the break down of the student demographic in the Boston Public School District.

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When taking a look at the academic category, The Bradley scored an eight out of ten, which is a promising sign. Students at The Bradley are making more academic progress, compared to where they were last year. Meaning that there is strong progress being made correlating to higher test scores, as well as how the school is supporting its students (Great Schools, 2021). When taking a look at the equity overview, disadvantaged students at The Bradley are performing about as well as other students in the state, but there are still some achievement gaps when looking at the data. These statistics speak volumes because that means that The Bradley is creating an environment where all the students have opportunities to thrive. Yes, there is still room for improvement but based off of the statistics compared to similar schools The Bradley is supporting their students and allowing them to excel.

Philosophy Statement

As I moved through my courses at Boston University, I had time to reflect on my own personal experience. I am extremely passionate about Social Emotional Learning (SEL), Equity and Access in music education, and how we, as teachers, should do our best to serve our students. As music educators, we must recognize that poverty is a serious issue, and that some students are unable to attend the classes that we teach. When it comes to music education, children growing up in poverty often have their voices silenced and may not feel deserving of programs and resources. I want to empower my students, and allow them to explore their emotions and provide them outlets to express themselves (Nevra, 2015). I want them to explore their inner world, create clear ties with works of art, and develop new views of themselves and their environment (Hess, 2020). Most importantly I want them to be heard and prioritized.

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I want to set up a safe classroom environment that allows the students to feel welcomed, so that we are able to discuss topics of social justice, diversity and inclusion of cultures from around the world (Bradley, 2007). In my opinion, a classroom can not function unless there is a certain level of trust between the students and the teacher. With that being said, I strongly believe that we must be aware of who we are in relation to our students to avoid perpetuating an entrenched power dynamic in the classroom. The political nature of music education is inherent due to 'who' is teaching and 'who' is learning, which is why it is important to get to know our students. The politics that go along with music education are intrinsic to the practice itself through course material and general stereotypes instilled into our society (Hess, 2019). My teaching style is a hybrid of the aesthetic and praxial approach. I think that performing and experiencing music as both a listener and player is essential when learning music (McCarthy, 2002). Music making can hold utilitarian values outside of the music room, allowing the possibility for a more unified and wholistic education (Alperson, 1991). By supporting and helping our students create their own music, we are letting them experience the basic beauty of music itself. At the same time, making music and creating is extremely important, but knowing context, history and background is just as important (Burnard, 2005). We can provide our students with the cultural and historical backgrounds of the music that they are working on, so that it opens up a new lens. It allows our students to approach music in a more contextual way. By providing both the aesthetic and contextual approach, we are providing more diverse tools for our students to connect to the music. As a result, I envision myself as a teacher using a hybrid

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method that incorporates several different teaching philosophies, since each approach has something unique to offer.

Rationale Statement

The reason why I chose The Bradley for my context in this project is because I think that The Bradley models an excellent example of how to support inner city students, and provide them access to opportunities like music, that they normally may not have. Coming from my background as an inner-city, low income, economically disadvantaged student, it is great to see how schools like The Bradley are changing in order to better support their students. Growing up in East Boston, and attending The Bradley in grades two through four, I did not have access to music education in school. So this project was a wonderful way for me to see the growth that The Bradley has made since I was a student there.

As a new teacher, I have been very vocal about what I am passionate about, and that is equity and access. So when researching for this project I was able to discover that The Bradley and I are aligned in many ways when it comes to teaching values. Like myself, The Bradley truly cares about the students emotional welfare as well as their environment. The Bradley aims to create spaces where the students feel safe and where equity, access, and inclusion are valued. As a teacher I could not agree more and love how The Bradley connects to the students and centers the learning around their wants and needs. The Bradley holds strong ties to the East Boston community and has changed for the better since my time there. I strongly agree with their mission, student values, and the expectations that they set for faculty and administration.

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When attempting to be critical in explore my tensions with The Bradley, the main thing that I thought of was how when it comes to music education and the sponsors that The Bradley works with, the ZUMIX sponsorship is very new. I was thrilled to hear that they have gained this partnership because now the students have access to a music education that I did not have growing up. So I am enthused to know that there is something available for the students that allows them to participate in music, but I feel like The Bradley could be doing more as a school.

In the new partnership with ZUMIX, The Bradley has heavily relied on them when it comes to musical resources. The school's only budget for the music program is a stipend that they use to pay the ZUMIX faculty member. Other than that there are no musical tools that are provided by the school. Meaning that all of the musical instruments as well as resources and performance venues are provided and hosted by ZUMIX. In normal times, this would be okay for the time being, but due to the unexpected year that we have had with the global pandemic, this means that the students at The Bradley lost their music program. So in my personal opinion, I think that the school should hire a music teacher, who can at least teach choral and general music. Then use the ZUMIX partnership as an aid when it comes to playing instruments, music work shops and performance venues. That way the music program at The Bradley could work with ZUMIX and not rely on them entirely for the student's musical experience.

As much as I would like to see a music program start at The Bradley, that is not sourced throughout a sponsorship, I do understand that the school has a lot of constraints when it comes to budgeting and resources. As I mentioned above, due to the global pandemic, and the hybrid style of learning the students lost their music program for a few months and did not have access

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to musical instruments. Normally, ZUMIX would be able to come in and provide instruments for the students to use during classes, but due to the current circumstances that can't happen right now. So the music classes are focused on a more General Music and Choral Music setting. So when it comes to teaching at The Bradley, these are some factors that I cannot control: budgeting, access to instruments, access to headphones, access to parental assistance. Meaning that most of the students do not have parents around that can actively help them with their school work. This also means that the students most likely will not have assistance with musical technology so a lot of the work has to be done in the music classroom, limiting the amount of material that can effectively be taught to the students.

On top of these constraints, because the music program is considered an enrichment course at The Bradley, the music class only meets once a week for thirty minutes, per grade. On top of this, the music teacher does not have the ability to grade the students. The music teacher works with the main teacher, and the course is considered as a pass/fail. The students are only 'graded' for their participation in class, and if they did most of the assignments. So as the music teacher, the only way to let the students know how they are doing in class, is through feedback given in class, due to the minimal amount of take home work. How does this effect virtual learning over ZOOM? As I have mentioned above, due to the current circumstances with the pandemic, music class is held entirely online. For the final performance, the students are required to participate in a virtual choir. Meaning that the students must record themselves at home singing all of the parts, and do a lot of work outside the music classroom. If the music teacher

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cannot grade take home assignments, this is left to the main room teacher on a pass/fail basis, which is a huge constraint in the music program.

Having a full understanding of the constraints and context of what it is like teaching music at The Bradley, how do you create a fair, equitable and accessible curriculum? One of the main goals of the program music partnership is to provide musical opportunities for students who would normally go without a music program in school. So as a teacher, when crafting a curriculum, it is essential to make sure that all of the students have access to the tools that would be used in class. Due to the extremely limited budget as well as the pandemic constraints, this means that instruments are not an option. Yet, one thing that the pandemic has brought the students is having access to their very own computer. This allows them to log into ZOOM for all of their classes as well as to having access to free online sources. At the moment, this can be very helpful when creating a virtual choir performance in the short time of twelve weeks. Free websites like Flipgrid, can allow the students to watch videos of instruction outside the music classroom. This grants them the ability to record themselves, both with audio and video, in a user friendly way. Free websites like Sound-trap, allow the students to explore music instruments through MIDI sounds, and provides a space for them to create and explore.

When planning lessons for the students, it is important to make sure that all the students have the ability to learn and participate. Meaning that some students may have never taken music before, and some may have had some experience. So when creating the twelve week curriculum, as teachers we must make sure that there is an entry point for each level of students. When thinking about creating this plan, with standards in mind, students may not be performing at their

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grade level's standard. Which goes back to the idea of creating entry points for each student in the curriculum. This kind of formatting is best shown and described in Appendix A, my Curriculum Map.

Curricular Context

Based off of all of the information regarding my teaching context, teaching philosophy and rationale for this project, What would teaching at The Bradley look like? In this twelve week program, the main goal would be for the students to feel confident in the learning process, and be proud of their accomplishments. So when crafting the curriculum, as teachers we must make sure that all of our students are doing their personal best, which aligns with the schools mission. We must provide entry points in our lessons to help all of the students succeed and provide accommodations to help students with learning or language barriers.

At The Bradley, we must also be aware of funding, equity and access. At home not all of the students will have parents who can help them at home with their school work, so we must leave some time in class to help the students who may be struggling. This allows all of the students to participate in the final virtual performance video. While creating this video, we as teachers must also be mindful when choosing what tools to use in the classroom. We must be working with resources that are free in which everyone has access. This is where learning tools like Flipgrid are helpful. Not only is Flipgrid free, but it is extremely user friendly. Flipgrid is also a platform where we could post video instructions and feedback to students who may not be able to read fluently yet, like first graders, as well as provide videos with subtitles for students with hearing disabilities. Flipgrid is also a place where we as teachers can post the directions in

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Spanish, considering 52% of the students at the Bradley identify as Hispanic and this may be a helpful tool for them, or parents that are able to help their children with their academic work.

As a current volunteer teacher working at The Bradley with ZUMIX, we have followed the plans and ideas represented in the Appendix A the curriculum map and other ideas from this project. Currently we are in week nine of the program and have four weeks left until the final virtual choir video. We have taken the song “Happy” by Pharrell Williams, and have created a large choir project that encompasses and includes grades one through four. To see this plan, and bits of the tools used to teach the students at The Bradley please see Appendix B, a link to my E-portfolio. Through this link, click on the Choral Lab Projects tab, there is a section at the bottom that showcases my work with The Bradley thus far, and the planning process behind the curriculum.

In the final performance video, the students will be showcasing the the rhythms that they learned in weeks one through three, with clapping rhythms in the song “Happy”. They will showcase their vocal skills by singing the solos and background parts that they learned in weeks four through six. We are currently in the recording phase of our curriculum, weeks seven through nine, where the students are sending in videos of them singing the solos and background parts. Then in the final three weeks, weeks ten through twelve, we will be collecting videos of the students dancing, and lip singing to the song “Happy”, as well as submitting videos of them talking about things that make them happy. At the end of week eleven, I will be taking all of the student submissions and turning it into one final video. This video, that showcases all of their hard work, will be shared with the students, faculty, families and the community. In Appendix B,

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you can hear an audio clip of all the different grades singing the solo parts. In these last few weeks, we want to make sure that the students are aiming to be courageous, confident and Bradley B.E.A.R.S.

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Appendix A:

Curriculum Map

Curriculum Map for Grades 1-4 at the Bradley Elementary School in East Boston

Units:

Grade Level	Rhythm	Pitches	Creating/Recording	Performing/Videoin
	Weeks 1-3	Weeks 4-6	Weeks 7-9	Weeks 10-12
1st Grade	Learning whole note, half note, and quarter note patterns.	Working on matching pitch patterns provided by the teaching in call and repose pattern. Learning melodies from rounds and singing in unison.	Learning Solos and Backgrounds singing parts from a chosen song. that all grades will sing a portion of. Recording parts in class with help from the teacher.	Creating Lip-synched videos to their solo parts for final virtual choir video. Creating videos of them dancing to certain parts of the song. Watch final video and celebrate in the last class.
2nd Grade	Learning whole note, half note, quarter note and sixteenth note patterns.	Working on matching pitch patterns provided by the teaching in call and repose pattern. Learning melodies from rounds and singing in 2 part rounds.	Learning Solos and Backgrounds singing parts from a chosen song. that all grades will sing a portion of. Recording parts in class with help from the teacher.	Creating Lip-synched videos to their solo parts for final virtual choir video. Creating videos of them dancing to certain parts of the song. Creating videos of them clapping rhythms that will be used as percussion in the final presentation of the virtual choir. Watch final video and celebrate in the last class.

Grade Level	Rhythm	Pitches	Creating/Recording	Performing/Videoin
3rd Grade	Learning whole note, half note, quarter note and sixteenth note patterns. Learning quarter note syncopation patterns.	Working on matching pitch patterns provided by the teaching in call and repose pattern. Learning melodies from rounds and singing in 2 part rounds. Learning 2 part songs and singing in 2 part melodies that are different but work together.	Learning Solos and Backgrounds singing parts from a chosen song. that all grades will sing a portion of. Recording parts on flipgrid after given tutorial in class.	Creating Lip-synched videos to their solo parts for final virtual choir video. Creating videos of them dancing to certain parts of the song. Creating videos of them clapping rhythms that will be used as percussion in the final presentation of the virtual choir. Watch final video and celebrate in the last class.
4th Grade	Learning whole note, half note, quarter note and sixteenth note patterns. Learning quarter note and sixteenth note syncopation patterns.	Working on matching pitch patterns provided by the teaching in call and repose pattern. Learning melodies from rounds and singing in 2 part rounds. Learning 2 part songs and singing in 2 part melodies that are more similar but work together.	Learning Solos and Backgrounds singing parts from a chosen song. that all grades will sing a portion of. Recording parts on flipgrid after given tutorial in class.	Creating Lip-synched videos to their solo parts for final virtual choir video. Creating videos of them dancing to certain parts of the song. Creating videos of them clapping rhythms that will be used as percussion in the final presentation of the virtual choir. Watch final video and celebrate in the last class.

All the classes in all the grades would be working towards 1 final virtual choir project, in which each grade has solo parts, background parts, dance features, rhythmic percussion parts and can participate in the final video in some way.

Appendix B

E-portfolio Link

<https://bu.digication.com/starr-desmond/choral-arranging-final-project>