

IDEAS AND ELEMENTS FOR LEADING A MUSIC EDUCATION TRAINING

Amanda Hoffman, “Garden Songs” Songbook and Training
Summer 2017
Madison, WI

I am an environmental educator.

I want to help environmental educators feel excited and confident about singing with their students to build an environment where all are excited to work and play together.

In the summer of 2017, I worked with food-education non-profit Community GroundWorks, and developed a singing-manual and songbook called Garden Songs.

Community GroundWorks also invited me to lead a training for their Kid’s Garden interns, where I could give over ideas and tools around song-leading in environmental education.

I constructed a manual and training. Below are some of the tools and perspectives that I included, and some that I decided not to include, due to limited time and resources.

I offer the following ideas and elements to anyone engaging in a similar project. Please edit and include them in your work as you like!

- A. **PREPARE for LEADING a TRAINING** (page 2)
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2 *"Garden Songs" Elements, Ideas, and Outtakes*

A. PREPARATION for LEADING a TRAINING:

1. Make one poster with song lyrics on it. Having lyrics available helps participants access songs and feel included.
2. Brainstorm pop songs for singing or parodying for the training or manual. Familiar songs helps participants access songs and feel included.

B. TRAINING STRUCTURE to ENCOURAGE ENGAGEMENT

1. Have different activities for people with different relationships to singing. Different small groups can take on different projects or different discussions, depending on what they want to work on. With different kinds of deliverables for those who want to engage in different ways. As group, as individual, writing and creating, thinking, drawing, singing...
2. Have evaluative conversation at the end.
3. Have final reflection/processing - what felt good, what felt hard, what felt surprising.
4. Have final coming together.
5. Move between small group sharing, then report back, and large group sharing.
6. Reflect or share with a group how participants feel about singing. Compare before training and after training, not to make sure that you've been learning, but to mark what direction you are growing in. Where you see yourself exploring or wanting to learn more.
7. After each song, give them time to reflect, write, draw, speak, on what they noticed, about a) me, and then also about b) themselves.
8. First sing in a group, then have participants sing on their own.
9. Teach the participants through questions.
10. Denote when we'll sit down or stand up and move around
11. Have name tags!

C. CONSTRUCTING a TRAINING AGENDA:

1. Have a to be determined section at the end depending on where we end up and what people want. Allowing for flexibility helps participants feel in control or listened to, and allows leader to shape training differently as they feel out the energy of the group.

D. INTRODUCING MYSELF and TRAINING

1. "Singing is important to me - that's why I'm sharing it."
2. Tell them, I'll be asking for their thoughts, their wisdom. We can't afford to be afraid to be wrong.
3. Share with them a great teaching/kid moment I've had with music, and a scary/sad/alienating moment.
4. "The point of this training is to give over two things. Confidence and Resources."
5. At beginning, go through activities we will/can do.
6. Ask if anyone has a song, singing activity, or Introduce Yourself singing activity.
7. Start with a dynamic activity - singing, moving, trading, laughing – like a Fake Laugh Exercise.
8. Build a sentence together - when we sing we build our world together.
9. Introduce myself: Why I'm here, What I'm doing.
10. I'm going to trust you to take care of yourselves during this time. If you need some quiet time, to use the restroom, you can step away. Decide what's right for you to share. Even if I offer a prompt to share, you don't have to respond in the perfect way.
11. I should have a movement thing available in the beginning to help folks shake it out. I can ask if anyone has one they want to do.
12. Talk about being queer, how I was taught to squash my voice, to hide from myself. How I spent years telling myself that my voice in my head was something else, that it wasn't mine. It's not that I have to identify with it all the time, I can negotiate it. But I want to embrace my wrongness.

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13. I can then talk about how I always told myself "no" in my head after thinking of something, and I started taking a chance on sharing.
14. Tell participants how the video will be used.
15. Tell them about my "grand disappointment" in not being a singer, to anticipate their thoughts on "Oh I can't sing and I'm sad that I'm not a singer."
16. Tell them about all the different people who contributed to this.
 - Batya: Singer, songwriter, leads group singing meetings
 - Emily: Music Therapist
 - Karen: Community Arts, Hip Hop
 - Rachel: Organizer, Activist, Singing for Activism and Social Change
 - COMPARE this to the benefits I list about singing in garden ed.

E. ESTABLISH RESPECTFUL GROUP NORMS

1. We are here to support each other even if we say no to each other for some reason.
2. Each person share some words at the beginning for positivity and encouragement.

F. FRAMING ANTI-RACIST WORK

1. Discuss white supremacy, cultural appropriation. Sharing where it came from. The folk process can change and pass on, but it can do so in a respectful way. Maybe someday it will just become "traditional" but for now you can be respectful.
2. Multicultural teaching strategies - let kids know what you need to feel "safe" and "at home," but be aware and patient with different modes of communication. Like, say, interruption. Talk about white supremacy culture and how it encourages people to be quiet.
3. Talk about appropriation, giving credit or sharing the story. Something can't come from nothing. Everything comes from somewhere.

G. ACTIVITIES for TRAINING:

1. At the end of the training, have each participant choose a word to include in a GLOSSARY that we create together. Writing and sharing encourages personal and group reflection of experiences and ideas from the training.
2. Have LONG songs and SHORT songs available for us to sing together. Have the group choose at least one of each. Allowing for flexibility helps participants feel in control or listened to.
3. In small groups,
 - a) come up with dance moves to a song
 - b) teach one song to the group
 - c) wisdom, a point of encouragement, a helpful idea to encourage expression and coordination
 - d) write a song parody
4. Go off and stand by yourself. Sing to a plant, like in Adopt a Plant activity, then come back and share what you noticed. About what's around you. About how your breath felt. How your body felt. Your senses. Your thoughts.
-- *Alternative:* Sing song or tell story, THEN have all go off for solo reflection or singing
5. "Temperature Game." Make statements and have participants stand in a certain place to show if they agree or disagree. Offer a few. You can agree with both but have something to share about one
 - a) "I'd sing more if..." fill in the blank
 - b) "I'm uncomfortable singing in front of others, but not speaking in front of others"
 - c) "I love singing"
 - d) "People are waiting for an excuse to sing"
6. Make a confidence box - what would you want to read from yourself or someone else?
7. Alisha can tell story of how she got the courage to sing. I could interview her, ask her a few questions.
8. Demonstrate a method of using singing in group behavior management. Showing the importance of voice modulation: being quiet gets attention too. Get participants all to talk then I'll start singing quietly and their job is to join in when they hear me.

H. TEACHING HOW TO SING

1. Lead a breathing exercise. Connect to principles of singing.
2. Breathing Exercise where you yawn on pitch. Some people will join in with that, some will only do a little, but at least they are trying something. Everyone ends up being so loud, so no one voice stands out
3. Have folks transition through mouth shapes - Get them to open up to an E vowel - closed. ooh - more open. Ah - vulnerable. Grounded in mouth movement, you are concentrating on movement. 64) BUY-IN:
4. Warm up - Many Mumbling Mice
5. Warm up - Just sing the ABC along do-re-mi

I. QUESTIONS to ASK DURING TRAINING

1. After teaching participants a song, asked what they noticed about my songleading.
2. Ask participants, "What are good hand motions for leading a song?"
3. Ask, "Is your voice a body part? How so? How is it not?"
4. Ask people to think of when a song was important to them (*have them show you, and themselves, how singing is relevant to their lives*)
5. When has being vulnerable about something made you feel stronger or more grounded?
6. When was a time you hid your voice?
7. Give people choices of questions or points they want to discuss with each other
8. When was it worthwhile for to you to do something you were afraid of, or that you thought would be embarrassing?
9. "When did a song help you learn?"
"When did a song/singing help you remember something?"
"When did a song/singing help you accomplish something?"
"When did a song/singing help you teach something?"

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10. What music do you like? When do you like to listen to music?
11. What associations do you have with music? Now, with singing? Why do kids sing? Why adults?
12. What were the elements in a great teaching or learning moment you were part of?
13. What are the dangers in asking kids to sing together? What must we be careful of?
14. Is there anything you want to let me know, as we begin this hour together?
15. What should we remember, in order to feel comfortable with singing?
16. What are myths about singing?
17. Why do people enjoy singing? Why do people not enjoy singing?
18. What was a book, a song, a story, a moment, that helped connect you to your voice? Your power? Your ability to be bright and beautiful for others, or for yourself?
19. What was a book, a song, a story, a moment, that helped connect you to your voice? Your power? Your ability to be bright and beautiful for others, or for yourself?
20. How has being confident and sharing in the face of fear helped you or others, from your experience?
21. What kind of songs are easy for you to sing? Easy for people in general to sing?
22. How is caring for a plant like caring for a person? Your CO₂ is someone else's O₂
23. How does play encourage connection and learning in outdoor space? In garden? How does free use of voice encourage play?

J. PHILOSOPHY and IDEAS to SHARE

1. You see it with the kids - music, songs, they move people, bodies, in the world, because they move breath and hearts
2. Vulnerability Meditation/Wisdom: Plants adapt and grow stronger through vulnerability.
3. When you ask someone to share their voice, what are you asking for? What do you get? You get mystery, the unknown, you trust others to share, you can trust yourself too
4. Confidence is something you cultivate, out of the soil of your life and body. It might be painful. You can't always wait until it feels right - sometimes you have to act to teach yourself you can do it. Think about it, others have done harder things. Or, done what you've done, and have made their lives and other lives better for it, in ways they couldn't even anticipate.
5. Singing is trusting your choices. Because every second it is you choosing - choosing to keep singing, choosing to take up space - that's all you! Even when you are following someone else. Then, when you are fully standing behind your decisions, acting as if you're ready to take responsibility, from that kind of present person, a group can form. Group made up of and around present people.
6. Singing is something people know how to do

K. KINDS of SONGS to INCLUDE

1. Include pop songs for people to sing, so they are comfortable with it. Then they can change the lyrics for parodies. Stand By Me. Take five min to think of more! Killing Me Softly.
2. Teach them possible Fill In The Blank songs
3. Have the participants choose what they want to do