



RAISE PRACTICUM EXEMPLAR ACTIVITY TEMPLATE

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Affiliate Organization: Young Audiences of NJ and Eastern PA
Art Discipline: Music/Songwriting

Title of Activity: Focus Song
Exemplar Focus: • Warmup Activity • Classroom Management
RAISE Connections: ☒ Social-Emotional Learning ☐ Healing-Centered Education ☐ Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Pedagogy
RAISE Principles: ☒ Community Grounding & Routines ☐ Creative Choice & Voice ☐ Emotional & Somatic Engagement ☐ Interpersonal Belonging & Relationships ☐ Reflection & Radical Imagination
Summary: The FOCUS song is the activity. It is an interactive song that has breathwork, call and response, and can be used throughout the class or residency or the year by teachers and students.
Rationale: I begin each residency or assembly with the FOCUS song. It is a 5 minute song with an active meditation component in the middle. Afterward, anytime the class is losing focus, I call out "WHERE IS MY FOCUS?" and they all chant it back. We then take a deep breath (with embodied motions) and exclaim our intention "I AM FOCUSED!" We then re-focus using our laser beam mode that is detailed in the song.

Goals:

Students will recognize when their focus has wandered, then consciously bring it back to a laser-like state. Students will practice REPETITIONS with me over and over as we go through our class or residency, and they will take it with them as a repeatable practice because the song is very catchy. Teachers always tell me that long after I have left, the kids still sing and use the song.

Materials and Supplies Needed:

Just the song. Teachers can sing it, although I do it with loop pedal, guitar, bass, beatboxing and with my Bose PA system. Those are not necessary, and any teacher can use the song.

Outline:

1. I begin with a slide that shows the elements of a song: Beat, Bass, Chords, Melody, Lyrics, Harmony
2. I show the class how I layer each layer to create the song.
3. Start with the BEAT. I ask the students to share with me what sound a "B" makes Then we do "T" sound and then a "K" sound
4. We then make a pattern (all music is patterns) and we do B T K T
5. I then share with them the more complex patten B T K TT B T B K I loop that in.
6. Then I add a bass line... (in F minor) I isolate the bass so they clearly hear it. Then I add Chords (also F Minor)
7. Then a melody and lyrics (I do a game of identifying melodies, I play happy birthday etc)
8. I get the loop going again and I ask them to repeat after me as I sing
"WHERE IS MY FOCUS"
"MY FOCUS IS A LASER BEAM"
(We do several rounds of this.)
9. I then go into an explanation of a "hook" and a verse.... And then I do the verse
"Your focus is your power; you control where it goes! Where you choose to put it you're the only one who knows"
"What you choose to focus on is what will come to be, When you make your FOCUS super-strong, amazing things you'll see"
10. We Do the HOOK again "Where is my FOCUS" (students repeat) "My FOCUS IS A LASER BEAM" (students repeat)
11. I then bring the music WAY down, just leaving the bass line... and then we do a meditation/focus exercise

Example Mediation/Focus Exercise:

1. We hold up a flower
2. We smell the flower DEEPLY
3. We Blow the imaginary flowers pedals (like a dandelion)
4. We exclaim "I AM FOCUSED!"
5. Repeat
6. This time we put our hands together in GASHO position (from REIKI)
7. As we breathe in we pull our hands apart WIDE
8. We bring them back together as we exhale slowly
9. They meet back together at heart level, and we exclaim "I AM FOCUED!"
10. We imagine laser beams shooting from our eyes. We make our focus STRONG.
11. We shift our focus to different things/ people around the room (shoot your lasers at the window, back on me, on the ceiling etc.) When they do the one on the ceiling, I go around and try to distract them... I say "DON'T ALLOW ME TO DISTRACT YOU!" and it becomes a little fun game
12. We move on to INNER FOCUS (I say you focus with your eyes, but you can also focus with your mind.)
13. I instruct the students to close their eyes and imagine their room at home.
14. I ask them to visualize their bed. Then I ask them to walk to their window in their room (in their minds) and look out the window
15. I confirm that students can visualize
16. We then place our hands on our hearts and do a moment of Gratitude (HEART-BRAIN Coherence meditation from HEARTMATH INSTITUTE) which is research backed way to improve heart rate variability (HRV)
<https://www.heartmath.org/resources/heartmath-tools/quick-coherence-technique-for-adults/>
17. We then open our eyes, returning our focus to the room and the song
18. Students repeat after me as I tell them they have to say "DROP THE BEAT" to bring back the beat
19. We then either get up and do a 30 second dance break or do the chorus one more time. IF we do the dance break, then we do the chorus once they are seated.
20. We use this call and response and breathing technique for the remainder of the residency and teachers have told me the students use it long after I am gone. And the teachers use it too!

Any Additional Comments:

I was with Michele Russo (YANJ-EP's Executive director) in an UBER as we were going between congressional offices at the *YA on the Hill* day, and Michele all the sudden sang, "Where is my focus" and then took a deep breath. I laughed and said, "Ha ha that's funny" and she was kind of startled. She said, "oh yeah, that's your song!" She then told me she uses that method to catch herself when her mind wanders and she needs to dial in. She uses it all the time and had observed me in a classroom a full year before that, and she said she uses it all the time, and she legitimately forgot that it came from me. It was just coincidental that I was there. That totally made my day.

I also have been doing a 20-week residency at a school in Trenton, and the teacher reported back to me that the kids sing and use that technique all the time. She hears "Where is my focus" in the hallways frequently, and I have overheard it several times as well as students in other classes are using it too. Thank you so much for RAISE and for everything. This has truly RAISED the bar of my teaching, and I am so grateful for the opportunity.

