

WHOLE SCHOOL SINGING

Teachers enrolled in Teach Through Music (TTM) were asked to take ideas, experiences and learning from the programme – and beyond – into the classroom: to do something different and reflect on the outcomes.

Rachael took part in the Teach Through Music Short Course VOICE WORKS, led by Jane Wheeler on behalf of Sound Connections. She also worked closely with her Teach Through Music Fellow, Amy Haynes of Lister Community School in Newham.

Jane, Amy and Rachael can be heard talking about their experiences in the Teach Through Music film 'Voice Works and Co-Design'.

How can I improve the quality and quantity of singing at both Key Stage 3 and across the school? Rachael Adediran, Skinners Academy, Hackney

Rachael teaches at “a culturally and socially diverse academy with enthusiastic pupils and staff improving standards in music”. On joining Teach Through Music she wanted “to develop my teaching approaches to raise the standard of pupil achievement at KS3 and in the long term, to increase uptake at KS4”

Rachael’s project focused on singing is an important foundation of musical learning and “a brilliant way to make music as a community and bring experienced and inexperienced musicians together”.

She set out to integrate singing more fully in the life of the school.

“At the moment, singing is limited to choir and those lessons or units of work that are singing focused. I would like pupils to sing as part of their everyday experience in order to raise confidence levels, improve musicality and provide opportunities for community music within the Academy”

– Rachael Adediran

Rachael's inspiration

Rachael took part in the Voice Works Short Course where she worked with Jane Wheeler and other teachers who wished to develop singing in their school. As a result she established two singing sessions per week for the whole of Year 7 and set out to develop the quality of singing in these sessions and motivate pupils to work towards performances.

From the Voice Works course she developed a 'prompt card' to remind her of strategies to improve quality in singing to take with her to session. She also used specific resources such as a series of 'rounds' and the use of pedals and loops, from a workshop with Randolph Matthews, to create new and exciting performance pieces with pupils. She arranged to visit Lister School in Newham, where her Teach Through Music Fellow, Amy Haynes, was developing her own whole school singing strategy on based competition between different House groups.

Leadership strategies

Rachael was faced with leading whole year groups in singing together for the first time. She set up the space with a rostrum to lead from and used an app, rather than a piano, for her starting notes. She taught rhythms and associated actions before moving on to pitch. The pupils were arranged according to height, to enable better communication, and she made sure to

use positive language throughout whilst modeling expectations of 'best' and 'worst' to try and keep everyone motivated. Rachael was also careful to manage her time so that each session ended at a point that gave everyone a positive singing experience, even if there was still time left before the bell. Since these initial sessions she has further motivated her students to sing through links with the Shoreditch Pop-Up Choir, the Massed Schools Singing Programme and a performance at the Hackney Festival.

"Use positive language and praise throughout, model expectations including best and worst sounds" – Rachael Adediran

The results and response

Rachael noticed positive results having successfully completed her project. She says, 'Pupils are generally well organised on Tuesday mornings, they come into the space in a positive frame of mind and respond well to the songs I have presented to them. A large number of pupils have also opted to take part in the Hackney Festival choir on a Thursday morning!'

She noticed the quality of singing improving, with contrasting parts being held comfortably. The pupils were responding well to her direction and this has also improved the accuracy of their voices. She added, 'Pupils are still struggling with confidence when it comes to new music, particularly in parts, but they will try and, when singing in unison, produce a good sound which is usually in tune on the first attempt. They can produce different qualities of sound when we do warm-ups, although this is not yet always evident in their performance.'



Personal reflection

'My confidence when teaching singing has improved dramatically. I also feel much

Teachers participate in a circle singing workshop with Guillermo Rozenhuler at the Teach Through Music Final Conference

more confident in having someone else come and evaluate the work I'm doing. This has come from working one-to-one with Jane Wheeler (I felt very exposed at the time!) and also the guidance she gave me on appropriate vocal ranges for the age group I am working with. The music I have delivered has been much more appropriate and therefore much more successful! More staff are singing, more pupils are singing and more of us are confident with our singing!'

Rachael has found that modeling in the classroom is much easier because both pupils and teachers are much more willing to sing. It means that the possibility of whole Academy Singing is much more realistic now. She has further ideas to introduce with her Year 7 cohort in 2015/16 and has proposed a House Singing programme to the school's Principal.

"More staff are singing, more pupils are singing and more of us are confident with our singing!" – Rachael Adediran
