



Daily Singing in a School Severely Affected by Earthquakes: Potentially Contributing to Both Wellbeing and Music Education Agendas?

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ABSTRACT

Since the 2010-2011 Christchurch earthquakes staff and learners at Waitākiri School have been participating in daily singing specifically to promote wellbeing, and wellbeing scores have remained high. Facilitation of the singing involved the creation of “no pressure”, democratic and participatory conditions, with teachers specifically avoiding judging learners’ progress and achievement, and having an unambiguous focus on being together and having fun. Coming together to sing provided the opportunity for a positive collective relational response to trauma that just ‘felt right’. Despite their passion for daily singing, however, participant teachers felt considerably less prepared to engage with music education tasks, which they aligned more with the ‘science’ or ‘technical aspects’ of music. As part of our action research process we examined this apparent dichotomy, and found that even when teachers have poor self-efficacy with regard to singing they can engage learners in singing by taking the focus away from music learning; and that learners were developing key competencies and learning musical concepts when singing informally. We conclude that increased focus on positive participation rather than skill-based learning is likely to contribute positively to both education and well-being agendas.

INTRODUCTION

Waitākiri School in Christchurch, New Zealand, where this research took place, was formed in 2014 from the merger of Burwood and Windsor Schools, as part of the larger restructuring of Christchurch schools following the 2010-2011 earthquakes. After the two schools merged, teachers began to engage learners in singing every day to develop and maintain a sense of community, and to promote readiness to learn. Despite living and working with significant on-going post-earthquake challenges, including moving to new flexible studio environments which each house four teachers and approximately 100 learners,

well-being and engagement data suggest that learners continued to feel safe, valued and supported.

'Singing for Well-being' was a two-year Action Research (AR) project, involving collaboration between Waitākiri School and Victoria University of Wellington. It was funded by the New Zealand Council for Education Research, Teaching and Learning Initiative (TLRI). It involved an examination of the ways in which the daily singing for well-being had been facilitated and sustained at Waitākiri School, and of teacher and learner perception of the relationship between singing and well-being. We found that singing contributes to learner well-being because it promotes positive emotions, improves mood, energises, connects people (peers, teachers, family), fosters identity, can comfort and calm, can result in a sense of achievement, and helps us learn (Rickson, Legg & Reynolds, 2018). This article focuses specifically on our findings with regard to teachers' facilitation of the daily singing.

Researchers are showing increased interest in the social and cultural effects of group singing (Clift, Hancox, Staricoff, & Witmore, 2008; Mellor, 2013), and note that singing can lead to a sense of connectedness, strengthen communities, and contribute significantly to social capital building (Hinshaw, Clift, Hulbert, & Camic, 2015; Theorell & Kreutz, 2012). Typical populations have described group singing as a joyful activity that promotes well-being and is life enhancing for those involved (Judd & Pooley, 2014). It can increase participants' sense of self-worth, and support the development of social skills and wider social networks (Bailey & Davidson, 2002, 2005) which in turn can lead to increased positive affect (Clift & Hancox, 2006).

The value of participating in group singing has also been highlighted in studies involving specific groups of people who are marginalised (Bailey & Davidson, 2005) homeless (Bailey & Davidson, 2002, 2005) or have experienced adverse events (Gao et al., 2012; von Lob, Carmic, & Clift, 2010). Singing is considered to be an important resource for people who have experienced trauma, to elicit positive emotions, energy, and feelings of safety; to restore hope and motivation; and to develop relationships (Cheong-Clinch, 2009; Gao et al., 2012). In addition to psychosocial benefits (Clark & Harding, 2012; Clift & Hancox, 2006; Judd & Pooley, 2014; Kirsh, van Leer, Phero, Xie, & Khosla, 2013; Livesay, Morrison, Clift, & Camic, 2012), singing has been shown to enhance immune functioning (Beck, Cesario, Yousefi, & Enamoto, 2000; Clift & Hancox, 2006) reduce stress and improve mood (Grape, Sandgren, Hansson, Ericson, & Theorell, 2003; Kreutz, Bongard, Rohrmann, Hodapp, & Grebe, 2004); facilitate physical relaxation, and enhance breathing and posture (Clift, Hancox, & Morrison, 2010).

Music education also has much to contribute to the music, health, and well-being agenda, and "many music educationalists are interested in the wider benefits of music teaching" (MacDonald, 2013, np). The New Zealand Ministry of Education recognises that learning in, through and about the arts "stimulates creative action and response by engaging and connecting thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings" and that "by participating in the arts, students' personal well-being is enhanced" (Ministry of Education, 2015, p. 20). Music leaders in New Zealand primary schools report benefits of musical participation in terms of "children's developing identities as members of a community of musicians, strengthened relationships over time between children and teachers, individual

children's improved engagement with school and learning...and an enhanced school culture and community" (Boyack, 2011, p. 256).

External factors such as standardised curricula or examination requirements often determine, however, the content of music education (Mitchell, 2016) and the emphasis is frequently on the development of conventional music skills such as instrumental technique or specific technical knowledge (Bruscia, 1998; MacDonald, 2013; Mitchell, 2016; Ockelford, 2000). An individual's experience of music education as therapeutic is therefore not inherent or guaranteed but rather is a possibility for individuals in specific contexts (Mitchell, 2016). Further, an increased focus on student achievement in numeracy and literacy in New Zealand schools has led to reduced attention being paid to such subjects as music, including singing (Chapman, 2015; Trinick & Dale, 2015).

Links between school based music and psychosocial benefits are complex, difficult to measure, and not yet well understood (Clark & Harding, 2012; Crooke, Smyth, & McFerran, 2016). The results of studies with professional, amateur, and community groups, and with participants across the age range, point to group process, the relationships between group leaders and between group participants, as important variables (Mellor, 2013). It seems the potential for singing to improve health and well-being involves more than the act of singing itself. Health affordances are generated and mediated by relationships between singers, the songs they sing, and the ways the singing is facilitated. Highlighting the way teachers successfully facilitate singing to develop and maintain wellbeing in a school community facing significant challenges is therefore important.

METHODOLOGY

This Action Research (AR) project was approved by Victoria University of Wellington Human Ethics Committee, #22081. Action research in education is systematic, oriented toward positive change in the school community, practitioner-driven, and participatory (Hine & Lavery, 2014; Mertler, 2012). It is often employed to address an identified 'problem'; although it has also been used extensively in education contexts to examine an area of interest (Hine & Lavery, 2014; Mertler, 2012). It is grounded in the belief that in the process of doing research people and their situations will change. That is, change takes place as knowledge is generated, rather than generating knowledge that might eventually contribute to change (O'Leary, 2017).

Action research minimises distinction between researchers and practitioners, focusing instead on participation and collaboration (O'Leary, 2017). In our project, the core team (Daphne and Robert, Victoria University of Wellington; and Dianna, Deputy Principal at Waitākiri School) collaborated with ten teachers and twenty learners through different phases of the research. Since this paper focuses on the facilitation of the daily singing, teachers' voices are dominant. However reference to 'we' reflects the collaboration of researchers, teachers, and learners.

The dynamic nature of action research allowed us to begin the research with broad questions which were both developed and refined through cycles of critical reflection and dialogue, leading to further or alternative action (Cardno, 2003). Each cycle involved planning (identifying and limiting the topic and

gathering preliminary information), acting (implementing the plan, collecting data, and analysing the data), developing an action plan, reflecting on and discussing the results (Mertler, 2012).

We explored the ways the singing brain breaks were facilitated via teachers' journals (in Google Docs), teachers' focus groups (involving all eight teachers, and deputy principal), learners' focus group, five individual teacher interviews, and engagement with the literature. Focus groups and interviews were recorded, transcribed in full and subjected to inductive thematic analysis; a process in which codes, categories and themes were allowed to emerge rather than searching for them according to a predetermined model.

Learning through reflection on action involves returning to the literature during the change process. Our evolving themes were examined in the light of the literature as they emerged. This process is reflected in this report where a paucity of literature in the introduction is balanced by the inclusion of new literature in the discussion section, to contextualise findings.

FINDINGS

Our initial focus group highlighted six themes relating to how teachers managed and sustained daily singing for well-being. From there they recorded their observations and reflections in Google Docs to see how well they were really doing, and to find out what they might improve on. We agreed to explore the value of teacher or child song choice; repetition of songs; song difficulty/ease of access; and the value of live accompaniment (see Appendix 1).

Fig. 1 below depicts six themes that were uncovered during the initial focus group. Three additional themes were uncovered during subsequent cycles of learning. The six themes were:

- 1. Teachers strongly believed that singing would be good for our learners**
- 2. Teachers were prepared to 'have a go' and to 'see what works'**
- 3. Singing is a motivating, equalising, accessible activity**

The daily singing in the studios needed to be "quick and seamless". The focus was on having fun—it is just "pure spontaneous enjoyment". It was important to us to have an activity that everyone could participate in, and we recognised that singing was an activity that "anyone could do anywhere at any time". While we made sure we had daily singing in the studios when all children would sing together, we noticed, however, that children were singing in a range of environments at a variety of times across the school day. Music had become a 'natural' part of the school environment with children singing spontaneously in the playground, and eagerly participating in the range of music activities that were on offer.

"It's fun, because they're really good pieces of music, and it's just like a rest for your brain". (Learner researchers' focus group)



Fig. 1: Factors enabling singing for well-being to be developed and sustained (initial findings)

4. Teachers and learners used readily available resources

Our singing was mostly supported by YouTube clips with lyrics shown on a big screen, although one of the participant teachers sometimes accompanied with guitar and very occasionally we sang unaccompanied. One of the participant teachers also used a book of printed lyrics from time to time. Later we recognised that using live instead of recorded accompaniment could rejuvenate familiar music.

We recognised that our specialist music teacher and kapa haka tutor were crucial resources, because they were addressing children's music learning needs giving us the flexibility to conceptualise singing for well-being another way. We value music education highly, but believed that singing for well-being needed to be facilitated differently in this context (see theme #9, below).

5. Children were given high levels of autonomy and choice

We enabled children to choose the songs they would sing, and how they would participate. For example, sometimes children would listen or move while others were singing. We encouraged them to enter their favourite songs into Google Docs, and vetted them to ensure the lyrics were appropriate before producing a playlist.

During our ongoing cycles of learning we reflected on the children's song choices to determine whether the lyrics were appropriate; the cultural relevance of their choices (e.g. was the song valued by family/s; a popular New Zealand song; considered to be a 'cool' song); and how the children were managing the technical aspects of the song (e.g. was it fast, slow, high, low; was there a lot of repetition; were the lyrics easy to sing?).

We observed that learners appreciated being given the ‘reward’ of being able to choose a song. While we believed that allowing children to choose what they wanted to sing was, however, important we recognised that they could only choose from songs they already knew, or had at least heard somewhere; and that the songs they chose were sometimes hard for them to sing.

Teachers therefore began to choose a repertoire, putting together a bank of songs, which included well-known children’s songs, as well as some of their favourite older songs. They noticed that it was helpful to include variety and surprise and learnt that children can be enthusiastic about a wide variety of genres. The learners generally had a positive attitude towards engaging with new material, and enjoyed singing children’s songs and their teachers’ favourite songs, as well as popular modern material.

6. Teachers took a non-judgemental approach

Teachers emphasised the importance of being non-judgemental. They wanted singing to be a fun activity, where learners felt no pressure to perform. When we began to look closely at the singing, we noticed, however, that children responded well to opportunities to become familiar with most repertoire (i.e. to practice), and often seemed more focused when they knew the songs well. We decided to enable children to become more familiar with songs by focusing on just a few.

Subtheme: Teachers and learners’ practiced songs, and achieved success

While we recognised that singing for well-being needs to be fun, we also recognised the importance of practising and experiencing success. We deliberately avoided putting too much overt emphasis on music ‘learning’ yet recognised that content can be challenging and that practising until the children knew the lyrics was important, at least some of the time. We began to choose songs that had repetitive phrases or choruses, and came back to them several times, increasing possibilities for learners to feel as if they knew the song well. Learners worked hard to participate in singing because they were passionate about what they were being asked to engage with. Daily singing in the classroom can bring feelings of success and achievement, and can lead singers to seek more formal singing (or other music learning) opportunities. We were also aware that the school’s kapa haka programme challenged children to perform at a high level while still seeming to contribute significantly to their well-being.

It gets you focused on what you need to do. We go through trials and tribulations of practising for that long, in that way, to get to a stage of making mistakes, and then knowing that it’s ok to make mistakes. We can learn from those. And we teach the tamariki [children] that that’s the reason why we practice and try to be focused like that so we can reach our goal. And the goal is to stand, have fun, sing and not make any mistakes. (Kapa Haka tutor, Interview)

We felt it was important in this context not to make judgments about learners’ progress and achievement in singing. Yet we learnt that children do

not necessarily have a sense of being 'judged' even when they are involved in preparing for and performing in competitions. Rather, they focus more on the positive aspects of being part of a group. Direction or encouragement (from teacher and/or peers) can motivate children's participation further.

After examining our facilitation more closely...we uncovered further themes:

7. Teachers fostered the opportunities singing afforded for connection and a sense of belonging

Teachers encouraged a sense of connection and belonging by acknowledging the relationships between the songs that learners chose, and other aspects of their lives. For example they would ask them about where they had found a song, and whether other family and friends also liked it. They talked with them about the stories their songs were telling and drew attention to the inspirational lyrics they brought. They helped them to acknowledge that their songs were recognised and appreciated by others, or alternatively to value their unique musical taste.

Teachers noticed that learners 'owned' their music and were proud when others joined in with it; thus helping them to develop their confidence, and sense of identity and belonging. As teachers began to choose more of the repertoire, learners were facilitated to request, engage with and express appreciation for the 'older' music that their teachers enjoyed. Sharing their music was a way of learning about and connecting with each other and relationships between dyads were enhanced.

Teachers also modelled that singing is a social activity that teachers, learners, families and friends 'just do' together. They talked about how music helps people to celebrate, takes them on journeys, and brings back memories; and how we can all be connected through our shared memories, experiences or feelings.

Teachers were also aware that being together in one large group for singing was important. It was something everyone could do at the same time. Teachers and learners worked in synchrony, not only with their voices but also with their bodies as they danced to the singing. The livelier songs energised the learners and when they were singing they invented action sequences and followed each other's movements. A sense of connection was evident, even without verbal interaction.

8. Teachers considered the mood of the group when choosing songs

It was not always easy to decide the 'best' song to introduce at any given time, but teachers learnt it was important to consider the mood of the group when choosing songs. They increasingly chose songs according to whether the general mood of the group was 'up' or 'down'. They noticed that group mood could alter within very short time frames, and energy levels would increase or decrease in response to the music. Learners seemed to sing and move more readily when 'bouncier' songs were introduced for example.

I like (singing) because um...sometimes I'm sad when I go to school but it like, brightens my day if I'm sad. And also at the end of the day 'cos I kind of feel sad when I'm

leaving school, it makes me happier. (Learner researchers' focus group)

Naturally, not all of the children liked all of the songs all of the time, and were less likely to sing songs that did not appeal to them. One of the fathers shared that his son preferred not to sing songs that recalled sad times. "That's the way it works for him. The songs that he does choose, he loves to sing because they make him feel happy". Naturally children can have different responses to music. A learner explained "Some songs make me emotional. Some songs make me happy. Some songs make me want to dance". We even had a sense that boys and girls responded differently to various repertoires, but had no opportunity to explore this possibility in depth.

9. Learners receive music education, and this is different to singing for well-being

During the research process we recognised increasing tension between 'just singing' and 'examining the process of singing', and began to question whether and how singing for well-being might align with music education. Teachers developed this collaborative statement during a focus group activity.

Singing for well-being is associated with high levels of choice and is less structured than music education programmes. People participate on their own terms with a positive attitude and gain confidence because there is no pressure and few expectations. It is the antithesis of specific, structured programmes which have targeted testable outcomes. It avoids engaging with the 'science' or 'technical aspects' of music; such as learning to read, understand, and critically analyse music, and developing a musical vocabulary. It is not concerned specifically with learning to sing; improving skills, progressing, producing and perfecting a musical product. (Teachers' focus group)

The overview of the New Zealand arts curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) suggests that students will explore, refine, and communicate ideas as they connect thinking, imagination, senses, and feelings to create works and respond to the works of others. We agreed that the New Zealand arts curriculum is broad to enable each school to develop a curriculum that is suited to their community; and the values espoused in the curriculum align with constructs of well-being. Musical participation is inherently purposeful, meaningful and fun; and children can learn musical skills naturally while they are participating. Music education is, or should be, intrinsically to do with people engaging in meaningful exchanges and activities, which promote good feelings. For example:

During a music education activity which focused on the meaning of lyrics, a child began to sing and to include additional parts. He felt good because he was able to choose the song. He was relaxed. He was also good at singing, and felt good about himself because he was

succeeding. His Dad loves this song, and it connected them in various ways. It connected him to his family and wider community culture. They were connected through enjoyment and knowledge of music. Wider connections were made as his mates also enjoyed listening to and singing with him. (Dianna, Individual Interview)

The language used in the curriculum naturally draws teachers towards assessment of student outcomes, however. For example the music (strand of the Arts) curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) emphasises the need for learners to actively develop their ideas and knowledge by identifying, describing, comparing, contrasting, investigating, researching, analysing and evaluating music. They are encouraged to express what they have learnt by presenting, representing or recording work they have prepared, developed, created, structured, interpreted and/or refined. The potential for them explore, express, create, and respond to music, and to consider and reflect on their music making, with less emphasis on measurable outcomes, is not so pronounced.

Participant teachers strongly agreed that there is room for more structured and formal learning alongside creative and social music making. They acknowledged that it was important for the children to believe they could be successful at singing and to gain a sense of achievement, which would in turn sustain their engagement in music. Despite being committed to daily singing, six of our eight classroom teachers did not, however, consider themselves to be musicians, were not confident singers, and did not believe they had the necessary knowledge and skills to teach music in the classroom. They maintained that all teachers have some subjects they are not so good at and that “it's easy to let them go, especially when the primary focus is on reading, writing, and maths”. To that end, they argued every primary school should have a specialist music teacher.

Nevertheless, as our teachers' confidence grew and they reflected more deeply on the work they were doing, they increasingly recognised the ways that their informal music making linked to music education objectives, and to key competencies. During the singing brain-breaks learners were thinking, relating to others, using language, symbols and text, managing themselves, and participating and contributing (see **Error! Reference source not found.**). Daily singing was likely to have contributed to music education objectives such as learning to describe and compare songs, understanding beat and rhythm, and developing more of an understanding about singing as a social resource.

At the end of the year we did a performance which I don't think we would normally have done and (included) body percussion with a group of boys—it was really amazing. (Jo, focus group contribution)

The kids groan and moan a bit about some of the older songs at the start but to see the enjoyment they've got from them, and the engagement, whereas we would be inclined to go with what the kids choose thinking that that's what's going to give them the most enjoyment. But it's not

actually been that way and it's broadened their musical appreciation as well. (Sue, focus group contribution)

The singing has offered opportunities for all kids to be involved as active participants, the music we did at the end of last year was similarly giving those kids a go—those who might not normally be perceived as being musical, and giving them a purpose, making it fun. And though we weren't teaching them notation and those sorts of things, I was using musical terms like 4/4 and they were learning rhythms and beats so they were still learning those concepts in a fun, purposeful way. (Matt, focus group contribution)

I don't think (the learners) would look at it as music education. They would just look at it as "we were having fun". When they think of music education, they think of what they do in their music programmes which is much more structured and much more formal. (Sue, focus group contribution)

DISCUSSION

Daily classroom singing could be introduced and sustained because teachers recognised that it was a motivating, equalising and accessible activity. They strongly believed that it would be good for learners, and were prepared to use the resources that were available to them, to 'have a go', and to 'see what might work'. The facilitation of the singing involved giving learners high levels of autonomy and choice, taking a non-judgemental approach, and employing specific strategies to foster feelings of connection and belonging.

When communities are vulnerable over an extended time frame, they experience stress collectively, appraise collectively, and respond collectively (Ebersohn, 2012). Instead of a fight, flight or freeze response, they might 'flock'; connecting to access, share, mobilise and sustain use of resources. This solidarity can counter on-going risk and support positive adjustment; that is, resilience can occur as a transactional-ecological process (Ebersohn, 2012). In challenging contexts such as our post-Christchurch earthquake environment, it is important for communities to feel as if they have some control; that they can see the risks, make collective decisions on how to respond, and take action, rather than feeling passive and overwhelmed. Singing, in our context, provided the opportunity for this positive collective relational response.

The participant teachers also insisted that this post-earthquake context demanded non-judgemental, "no pressure", democratic and participatory conditions. Learners made decisions about what they would sing, and how they would engage with singing. They took various leadership roles such as accessing lyrics, managing technology, and leading spontaneous dance routines during singing. Learners who might have been uncomfortable with singing had a chance to participate in other ways, including listening. As Crooke and McFerran (2014) suggest, music activities do not have to be strictly

'musical' to promote benefits. "Rather, their ability to afford opportunities for students to participate in and be recognised as a valuable or contributing member of a group is what makes them valuable" (p. 26). Participatory and democratic approaches are empowering and lead to increased engagement. Boyd, Bonne & Berg (2017) argue that few New Zealand primary and intermediate schools consult students about new ways to foster wellbeing, or seek their input when developing approaches to wellbeing. Our singing programmes were strongly underpinned by mutual purpose, and had a significant focus on student autonomy and choice. The opportunities students had to 'lead' the singing programme would have contributed to their sense of belonging, and to their emerging competencies to contribute to others' wellbeing (Boyd et al., 2017).

Participant teachers' intuitive insistence that the primary focus of the daily singing should be on having fun seems critical, since Crooke and McFerran (2014) argue that when aiming for psychosocial wellbeing benefits, activities which focus on musical ability (such as perfecting singing for performance) should be avoided unless specifically requested by participants. Conversely, music activities that focus on expression and fun should be encouraged to enable learners to experience music as engaging, enjoyable and useful in terms of communicating feelings (Crooke & McFerran, 2014). This is not to say that music education cannot be fun. Teachers and learners' experience of music education can, however, be variable. In one study, (Lamont, Hargreaves, Marshall, & Tarrant, 2003) learners suggested engaging with music outside of school is associated with enjoyment and increasing positive moods, while music at school is associated with learning and is therefore less pleasurable (Maury & Rickard, 2016). The potential for music making to have positive outcomes in the well-being domain is mediated by competitive environments (Gembris, 2012; Grape et al., 2003; Hinshaw et al., 2015; Hylton, 1981; Kirsh et al., 2013) and when the focus is too strongly on the technical aspects of music, the importance and meaning of the work can be lost. Skill-based music activity may even lead to an increase in anxiety and have limited psychosocial benefits for vulnerable populations (McFerran, 2010) and disconnection from a curriculum context may be necessary to facilitate sufficient learner engagement (Rickard, Bambrick & Anneliese, 2012).

Even though participant teachers agreed that the New Zealand arts curriculum is broad enough to enable each school to develop a curriculum that is suited to their community, they seemed intimidated by the focus on measurable outcomes. They also suggested, wellbeing initiatives aside, that time constraints would typically lead them to concentrate on 'core' subjects of reading, writing, and mathematics rather than the arts. Yet as they reflected more deeply on the work they were doing and as their confidence grew, they recognised the ways their informal music making linked to Key Competencies, and to music education objectives. Informal learning such as learning songs and developing rhythmic skills can occur without educational planning (Bunt, 1997; Preti & Welch, 2004) and the various elements involved in musical participation—the music, the setting, the participants—can all contribute to musical, social, inter or intrapersonal learning (Preti & Welch, 2004). Children respond enthusiastically to informal learning pedagogies that draw on their inherent learner agency (Power, 2014). They can learn how to play music together by watching and imitating other children and adults, developing skills

and obtaining knowledge, consciously and subconsciously. While some music will need to be taught if children are to understand formal concepts, other music should be introduced simply because it is fun (Thorn & Brasche, 2015).

Our findings therefore suggest there may be value in promoting approaches to music education which focus more on the processes of participation, because they are less likely to cause apprehension amongst children and may have benefits for children's development and wellbeing (Higgins, 2015; Buchan, 2013, in Power, 2014; Tucker & Mantie, 2006). Music education is already broadening to include not only increased technical expertise, but also opportunities for enjoyable, everyday musical experiences MacDonald (2013) and Maury & Rickard (2016) agree that this is a positive trend for increasing well-being benefits. Moreover, our demonstration of links between daily singing in the studios and the development of Key Competencies should provide additional impetus for primary schools to introduce daily singing in the classroom. Singing is one of the most accessible ways for a teacher to conduct a music programme (Heyning, 2011) and we have shown that even when teachers have poor self-efficacy with regard to singing and teaching music, they are still able to engage learners in singing by taking the focus away from music learning. By turning from concepts such as learning to sing; improving skills, progressing, producing and perfecting a musical product, participant teachers became passionate committed facilitators of daily singing. Maury & Rickard (2016) argue that there is a need to increase the level of research conducted with populations that are co-creating music without technical expertise. Our research answers their call for researchers to increasingly illuminate the ways untrained music making affects individuals and groups (Maury & Rickard, 2016).

There is an urgent need for mental and emotional wellbeing support in New Zealand schools, especially for students with mental health issues (Boyd et al., 2017). Singing in the classroom can be adopted as a proactive approach to wellbeing, strengthening protective factors that act to "enhance the likelihood of positive outcomes and lessen the likelihood of negative consequences from exposure to risk" (Boyd et al., 2017, p. 12). O'Connor (2013) notes that following the Christchurch earthquakes, the very purpose of education was shaken and "the idea that schools are simply places for skills' acquisition was deeply challenged" (p. 432). While the need for "love and care" dominated over literacy and numeracy, the New Zealand Education Review Office (2013) noted that in 2011 Christchurch achieved some of the best NCEA results in New Zealand. O'Connor concludes that if schools focused on being fun, safe, and interconnected places with their communities, educational achievement would take care of itself. We agree with researchers (Chin & Rickard, 2014; von Lob et al., 2010) who declare that music making can have a positive influence on learners' musical development as well as having an important and unique role to play in well-being and health.

Having a 'good time' means time well spent (Tucker & Mantie, 2006, p. 35).

CONCLUSION

This article focused on findings from one school where teachers were facilitating daily singing, specifically to support staff and learner wellbeing

following the Christchurch earthquakes. We described teachers' facilitation of the daily singing, which was intuitively tailored to the needs of a community living in a post-earthquake environment. Teachers emphasised the need to create democratic and participatory conditions where learners and teachers sing together, purely for fun and enjoyment. In this context singing provided the opportunity for a positive collective relational response to significant adversity.

We also explored teachers' collective perception that singing introduced specifically to target learner wellbeing is different to engaging in music education tasks; and their belief that they were not equipped to teach classroom music. Their argument that 'singing for wellbeing is different' is supported by literature that proposes the success of psychosocial wellbeing programmes may actually depend on initiatives that specifically focus on issues of wellbeing (such as developing a sense of community following natural disasters) rather than curriculum; and that wellbeing benefits are more likely to be realised when activities focus specifically on self-expression and having fun. While acknowledging that many people experience music education as a pleasurable activity, we caution that the potential for music making to contribute to the wellbeing agenda can also be mediated by learners and teachers' perceptions of stress associated with a music learning environment. Conversely we were able to link informal singing in the classroom to wellbeing indicators (Rickson, Legg, & Reynolds, 2018), Key Competencies, and some music education objectives.

We conclude that there may be value in promoting approaches to music education, which focuses more on the processes of participation, because they are less likely to cause apprehension amongst learners and teachers, and may have benefits for learners' development and wellbeing. In addition to technical aspects of music making and strategies for practising, learners need multiple opportunities to engage with different kinds of music making (Lamont, 2011). Singing, as one of the more accessible forms of music making, affords considerable potential in an environment where the pressure for teachers to focus on student achievement in numeracy and literacy is increasing. We have demonstrated that even when teachers have poor self-efficacy with regard to music making, they are able to engage learners in singing by taking the focus away from music learning. We therefore conclude that increased focus on positive participation rather than skill-based learning is likely to contribute positively to both education and wellbeing agendas.

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Questions	Action	Where did we get to?
How is the singing facilitated?	Teacher focus group	We could describe how the singing developed and is facilitated. We agreed to examine the 'sing-ability' of the material that was introduced.
Are we using the most appropriate repertoire?	Observe, reflect, plan & act Use google docs to document	Some songs are easier to sing than others. We agreed to introduce songs specifically written for children.
What do the learners think about singing?	Learners captioned artworks Learner focus groups Learner interviews	Learners are extremely positive about singing and describe a wide range of perceived benefits. They enjoy a wide repertoire of songs. Why do teachers need to examine their facilitation of singing for well-being?
Do teachers need to know more about how to facilitate singing?	Teacher focus group	Singing for well-being is different to music education. Teachers are not confident to teach music.
How/why is singing for well-being different to music education?	Teacher focus group Learner focus group Literature review Review curriculum docs	Singing for well-being is for fun, learner-led. Children are learning and achieving as part of this experience. Music education has targeted testable outcomes.
Could music education also have intrinsically benefits that link to well-being?	Individual teacher interviews Literature review Review Key Competencies	Music education activities do not automatically lead to well-being benefits. Singing was an activity that supported the well-being of our community because it met our specific needs for collective expressive activity.

Appendix 1: Action Research Cycles

Learning focus/context/knowledge/understandings					
	Thinking: Children have been thinking about...	Relating to others: Children have been...	Using language, symbols and text	Managing self	Participating and contributing
Authentic purpose	How does SW help us?	Singing 'with'	Words on a screen; technology use; visual movement (actions)	Singing to stay safe and well	"Just do it" Intrinsic and extrinsic benefits
Real, meaningful roles	What songs are best to sing?	Collaborating with and supporting others	Choosing songs; managing technology; engaging in singing to support learning	Singing to stay safe and well	We participate because singing is a happy/joyful activity which connects us to others
Authentic contexts within and beyond school	Who else sings/likes these songs?	We can sing anywhere, and with other people	Enjoyment and valuing of singing leads to motivation for learning more about music in different contexts	We can sing anywhere, anytime	We participate because singing is a happy/joyful activity which connects us to others
Integrating knowledge/attitudes and values	How do I, can I, should I, participate in SW?	Talking with teachers and families about songs and singing	Enjoyment and valuing of singing leads to motivation for learning more about music in different contexts	Collaborating with others towards pleasurable outcomes	We feel better, we learn more, we are successful and we have a positive attitude to working with others
Fostering learning dispositions	How do I want to participate in SW?	Listening, choosing, leading, following	Music - a symbolic language in its own right	Using imagination and creativity	We can participate in singing, we can listen, we can move to the music

Critical Thinking: purposeful, reflective judgement concerning what to believe or what to do. Creative Thinking: is a function of intelligence and takes many forms. Creativity is the ability to produce through imaginative skill something new. (Wright, 2010; Robinson, 2009). Two important aspects: gathering and absorbing the information (critical thinking) leading to the transformation of this knowledge to generate new ideas (creative thinking). (Simister, 2007)

Appendix 2: Daily singing and its relation to the Key Competencies

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