

Listen to Your Heart: Promoting Traditional Music in the Schools of Appalachia

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Introduction

Appalachian culture is well-known for its music and promoting traditional music in the region's public schools can preserve that heritage. This project:

- Investigates different ways to nurture traditional music in Appalachian public schools
- Identifies challenges to implementation of traditional music programs in public schools
- Explores strategies for nurturing traditional music instruction among children in the region

Methods

- Interviews with traditional musicians and music educators with experience in southeastern Kentucky— both in person and via video conferencing and telephone.
- Extensive internet searches exploring traditional music educational programs in public schools
- Examination of existing programs' approaches to challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic

Findings

Traditional music can be fostered in the region's public schools by implementing more educational music programs. Three programs were identified during this project:

1. Pick and Bow, an after-school program serving students of Floyd and Knott County, Kentucky
2. The Kentucky School of Bluegrass and Traditional Music of Hyden, Kentucky, an after-school program that provides weekly lessons
3. JAM! (Junior Appalachian Musicians), an after-school program benefitting grade school children that introduces music through small group instruction in south central Appalachia

Challenges when implementing traditional music programs in public schools:

- Increasing budget cuts push the cost of instruments, visiting artists, field trips out of reach. Two funding sources were identified:
 1. Regional non-profits, such as South Arts
 2. 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grants
- The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many schools to rely heavily on technology for instruction delivery

Conclusions and Future Directions

A series of pre-recorded instructional videos available online could increase the accessibility of regional music instruction even during times of remote learning, while promoting an inexpensive way for Appalachian youth to learn more about their musical heritage.

These videos might include:

- Introduction to the instrument
 - History of the instrument
 - Different parts of the instrument
 - Proper care
- Tutorials
 - Strings and tuning
 - Chords
 - Playing by ear
 - Reading tablature and sheet music



Full Video: <https://youtu.be/s4Gi5zl0rE>