RESPONSES OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AND THEIR TEACHERS TO A WORLD MUSIC PREFERENCE SURVEY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate student listening preferences towards examples of music from around the world. The study of characteristics of music from different cultures is included in the school music curriculum, and music is an excellent medium with which to introduce multicultural lessons to school-aged children. By understanding their reactions to unfamiliar world music, teachers can develop strategies for introducing children to this music in the most appropriate ways. A total of 443 third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade children from three elementary schools in Southwest Missouri responded to the 10-example listening survey, rating the degree to which they liked each song, would like to hear it again, or would like to purchase the music. The students’ music teachers participated in interviews designed to provide a context for the student responses. Students in all three schools demonstrated moderately high responses to the multicultural music. The music teachers expressed various perspectives and concerns towards including world music in the curriculum, including lack of time. Their students’ levels of interest and tolerance for the world music examples presented surprised them. Results of this study may be used to reassure teachers that children tend to respond positively to multicultural music, and to encourage them to set aside the time necessary to teach world music in the school music curriculum so that their students may benefit from expanded musical and cultural perspectives and learning.