

Capstone Project Proposal
Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus:
A Peer Social Support Group
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Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus Introduction

Engaging in the creation of any art form not only promotes self-expression, but also stimulates positive outcomes, while transforming perspectives of self, others, and the surrounding environment (Clements-Cortes & Yip, 2017; Hillier et al., 2012; MacGlone et al., 2020; Young, 2020). Sharing the experience of creating music together builds self-confidence, friendship, and compassionate community (Thompson & McFerran, 2015; Ford, 2020). When it comes to community, one of the most damaging campaigns of the COVID-19 pandemic is social distancing; it has created experiences of isolation and loneliness, affecting the mental health of the UWT student community (Hwang et al., 2020; Bu et al., 2020; Birmingham et al., 2021). Loneliness is painful, but it is more painful to be excluded because of a climate of culturally arrogant obliviousness. Music making together is a powerful platform for fostering a neurodivergent¹ student community at UWT (Bakan, 2014; Picard et al., 2020; Young, 2020). The intervention I envision is a monthly social gathering for neurodivergent Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) students, including all neurodivergent students, in a sensory-friendly, culturally sensitive, safe-to-be-yourself, judgement-free space.

Needs Statement

University of Washington Tacoma neurodivergent BIPOC students, and all neurodivergent students need a safe, judgement-free, sensory-friendly community arts space to decrease dropout rates and end feelings of rejection and isolation that may lead to more serious mental health issues.

Personal Motivation

¹ The term, Neurodivergent, includes people on the Autism spectrum and people with other neurological conditions such as dyslexia and ADHD. Neurodivergent people are those whose neurobiology gives them the ability to access a very different range of “neurocognitive functioning” than neurotypical people. (Kapp, 2020, p.2)

The inspiration for this intervention comes from my experiences as a professional harpist and seeing the reactions from my audiences. Also my experience as a child watching my mother working on her undergraduate degree in ethnomusicology. This taught me that the healing power of music exists in every culture across the world. Other inspiration came from being able to use harp music during my generalist practicum at the UW Autism Center and during my specialization practicum at the UW Adult Autism Clinic. My motivation for implementing this intervention comes from my understanding of the difference between music therapy, an interactive experience, and therapeutic music, a passive experience. I use elements from each of these disciplines in my capstone project. Motivation also came from my experience of studying to become a Certified Clinical Musician learning to provide therapeutic music in a clinical setting.

Problem

Neurodivergent BIPOC students at UWT experience loneliness, anxiety, depression, and exclusion from the white neurodivergent community, who also experience the same mental health issues, due to fewer opportunities than neurotypical students for culturally sensitive, sensory-friendly, creative social engagement (see Appendix A).

Population Served

Neurodivergent BIPOC students, and all neurodivergent students at UWT will be the population served in-person and via Zoom. During the online Meetup version of this intervention, surrounding university and college neurodivergent students will also be included.

Supporting Evidence

Neurodivergent BIPOC students at UWT matter. Historically, at the intersection of racism and ableism, neurodivergent BIPOC children have been either disproportionately

misdiagnosed with Conduct Disorder (CD) or diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) at least one year later than white children (Obeid et al., 2020; Drame et al., 2020). This has contributed to BIPOC children with ASD being denied early interventions and services (Obeid et al., 2020; Drame et al., 2020; The Color of Autism Foundation, 2021). Excluding the voices of the neurodivergent BIPOC community from the literature set the stage for the inequitable treatment of neurodivergent BIPOC adults in the community at large, including neurodivergent BIPOC students at UWT. All of these historical actions have also contributed to the exclusion of the BIPOC autistic community by the predominantly white autistic community and the stigma existing around autism in the neurotypical BIPOC community. (Burkett, 2020; Drame et al., 2020; Gourdine & Teasley, 2011; The Color of Autism Foundation, 2021). So, it is not surprising that this should also be the experience of neurodivergent BIPOC students at UWT.

Understanding social cues, and engaging in social interactions and relationships are all common areas of struggle among many students on the autism spectrum (Ames, McMorris, Alli, & Bebko., 2015). Many neurodivergent college students choose not to disclose this part of their identity because they cannot find opportunities to connect with the neurodivergent community. Their hope is to avoid being excluded or bullied by their neurotypical peers, or to circumvent uncomfortable spaces on campus that do not meet their sensory needs (Clements-Cortes & Yip, 2017; Frost et al., 2019).

Neurodivergent adults who participated in group music therapy interventions demonstrated positive social skills and attitudes towards peers which increased self-esteem and self-confidence (Hillier et al., 2012, 2016; Young, 2020). Specifically, singing together facilitated social connectedness and contributed to overall physical health and wellbeing (Allen et al., 2009; Andsdell, 2014; Hillier et al., 2012, 2016; MacGlone et al., 2020; Pickard et al.,

2020; Ruud, 2005; Young, 2020). Research has shown that neurodivergent college students who participate in extracurricular music groups achieve better academic performance. Community music events on campus may also serve as protective factors for neurodivergent students at risk for dropping out (Ashbaugh et al., 2017; Anderson et al., 2018).

Guiding Theoretical Frameworks

Through the lens of Feminist Standpoint theory, it is possible to facilitate understanding of specific populations from their direct experience (Cabrera et al., 2020; Hekman, 1997). This theoretical framework supports the need to amplify the voices of the neurodivergent population. This perspective is almost absent from the literature and echoes the motto of the neurodiversity movement: nothing about us without us (Charleton, 1998). Out of Kenny's (2014) exploratory study of a supplemental elementary school music program emerged a theoretical framework, known as community music practice (CoMP). CoMP uses a socio-cultural theoretical lens to support the idea that learning is developed through culture, is socially manufactured, and is created through a shared experience. Finally, Black Feminist Empowerment theory focuses on the strengths of Black women and girls, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration and equality (Hill Collins, 2000). It is only recently, that neurodivergent Black autistic women and girls are being recognized and heard (ObeySumner, 2018, 2019; Gourdine & Teasley, 2011).

Past Interventions

Square Pegs on Campus was the first peer support group for autistic students at the University of Washington Tacoma. Launched in winter 2020 as an online Meetup group due to in-person COVID-19 restrictions on campus, it was supported and marketed by the RSO, "NAMI on Campus". This intervention provided an online space for peer support of autistic students.

Incorporating Neurodivergent BIPOC Perspectives

The inclusion of BIPOC students in the autistic community is one of two focal points of this project. The other focus is to provide a community music gathering for all neurodivergent students at UWT to feel welcome and safe to be themselves, share their favorite music, and support each other. However, since the neurodivergent BIPOC student community is excluded from most of the empirical literature, I purposely interviewed stakeholders who were not white and not male because it is vital that female BIPOC voices are heard. I am grateful for the few peer reviewed articles I was able to find, as well as a book that explores the journey of Black families raising children with Autism (Drame et al., 2020). I also found a website that supports Black families raising children with Autism (The Color of Autism Foundation, 2021). However, gaps in the literature still remain.

Incorporating BIPOC neurodivergent perspectives will begin with recruiting BIPOC neurodivergent leaders or BIPOC neurotypical allies. Facilitators will give a brief explanation of how a trauma informed space is created by everyone in attendance. Guest speakers from the UW Tacoma BIPOC community and surrounding the South Sound will be invited to present their favorite music and discuss with students how it is meaningful for them. Sharing these personal insights helps to create compassionate community and a sense that neurodivergent BIPOC students are supported by peers with similar experiences and understanding.

Description of Project

Intervention

Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus seeks to build a new student alliance on the UW Tacoma campus. Connections between neurodivergent students and their allies are nurtured through a diverse array of arts activities. This intervention will start with monthly events that

bring together the neurodivergent student community to gather, discuss favorite music, enjoy delicious food, build cultural awareness, and share favorite songs. Each event will have a different focus on music through group activities, such as drum circle, hands-on healing harp music, and more. We will begin with a check-in question followed by group conversation and community music making. Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus will be a judgement-free, shame-free, safe-to-be-yourself space that will engage a trauma informed care approach to peer support, especially when emotionally charged stories arise about how music is personally meaningful. All monthly events will be held in a sensory-friendly prepared space on the UW Tacoma campus and virtually through Zoom for students who cannot attend in person. There will also be a monthly online version through Meetup. Later we will expand to include creative writing, acting, painting, sculpture, and dance/movement – each in a different sensory-friendly, accessible space.

Goal

My goal is to develop and promote a casual, comfortable monthly community music social gathering, based on the principles of Community Music Therapy² in a culturally sensitive and safe, sensory-friendly space.

Objectives

Objectives for this intervention include two outcomes and two indicators for each outcome. The first outcome will be a comfortable, casual, sensory-friendly space for

² The use of community music therapy (CoMT) in the field of music therapy has been shown to be highly beneficial for autistic adults (Allen et al., 2009; Andsdell, 2014; Hillier et al., 2012, 2016; MacGlone et al., 2020; Pickard et al., 2020; Ruud, 2005; Young, 2020) as well as other neurodivergent adults. Community Music provides opportunities for social connectedness and a sense of belonging through making and experiencing music together.

neurodivergent students on the UW Tacoma campus. The first of the two indicators for this outcome will be that DRS can book rooms for student events, students can book rooms, and Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus will be launched on the Meetup platform for online Zoom gatherings. The second indicator for this outcome will be that UW Tacoma neurodivergent students approve of the sensory-friendly accommodations.

The second outcome will be that UW Tacoma BIPOC neurodivergent students, and all neurodivergent students, will feel included, safe, and supported by each other. Students will also feel confident in expressing themselves and connecting socially through music and other arts-based activities. The first indicator for this second outcome will be positive feedback from UW Tacoma neurodivergent students through surveys or interviews. The second indicator will be interviews or surveys indicating student satisfaction before and after the intervention.

Timeframe and Action Steps

Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus events will take place once a month. Events will be held during Spring, Summer, and Fall quarters on campus with accommodations through Zoom for UW Tacoma students who cannot attend in person. During Winter quarter, Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus will be held through Meetup and will include students from surrounding universities and colleges as well as neurodivergent members of the surrounding Tacoma community.

Although my research is complete, there are many action steps still ahead. The timeframe and action steps in progress for the completion of this project are as follows:

Recruitment

I am currently in the process of sending out campus wide announcements through requests to the DRS office, Student Activities Board (SAB), and the Graduate Student Equity and Excellence newsletter.

Funding

I am starting the application process for the Husky Seed Fund. The deadline for the Husky Seed Fund statement of intent is March 29th and if this submission is selected, the final deadline is April 7th. I am also continuing to look for other sources of funding.

Sensory Friendly Survey

I am putting together a survey for students who will be attending in-person to find out what kind of accommodations will be needed for each space we will be requesting.

Pre and Post Interview Questions

I am currently putting together pre and post interview questions for students who will be attending Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus either in-person or on Meetup.

Marketing

I am working with my leadership partner, Rain Wilson, and my leadership consultant, Andrewnette Reed, to design flyers to be distributed by DRS and the SAB.

Political Climate, Campus Policies, and Barriers

So far, the political climate seems very supportive of this intervention and I have not encountered any opposition. However, there is always someone left out when attempting to launch a new initiative and there may be students who will take umbrage to something I have not considered. Barriers are often practices that are derived from policy. For example, once I graduate and I am no longer a graduate student, will I still be allowed to act as an alumna consultant to help student leaders with questions or other work that needs to be done? This remains to be seen.

Evaluation: A Narrative of the Collection Data

Indicators of Success

Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus will be successful if students who have been attending provide positive feedback reflecting outcomes that indicate that their expectations are

being met. However, another indication of success is how comfortable students feel about making suggestions for changes to the group as this would be an opportunity for growth.

Measuring Project Success

Validity and reliability measures will also help to ensure the success of this project. Two of the ways I will measure the validity in my work will be member checking and pilot testing. Member checking will involve seeking student input on the questions asked about sensory-friendly accommodations from the survey. Pilot testing requires sending out surveys to just a few students to see if the questions are working in terms of clarity, comprehension, and the time it takes to complete the survey.

Reliability will be measured by debriefing with the student members attending Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus. During debriefing we will discuss expectations versus experience during participation; leadership preparation to facilitate the group and manage the flow of contribution and activities; and consistency in the use of terms such as “healing” and “community”.

Personnel

Marketing Manager & Volunteer Assistant (4 hours/month total)

- Schedule local guest speakers & find out fee
- Email fee request to treasurer
- Type up announcements, room request, and Zoom set up requests for remote attendees and email them to Heather at DRS.)

Treasurer (5 hours/month total)

- Manage funds
- Keep accurate records of awards & grants
- Manage outgoing expenditures

Operations Manager & 2 Volunteer Assistants (3 hours/month total)

- Set up room & clean up
- Set up food and beverage tables with disposable utensils outside event space

Drum Circle Facilitator (4 hours/month total)

- Prepare welcome rhythm, ice breaker question, improvisational ideas for interactive rhythm activity, and farewell rhythm

Music & Art Facilitator (4 hours/month total)

- Prepare welcome song, ice breaker question, conversation topic or musical instrument share, musical activity or arts-based activity, farewell song.

Facilities

Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus monthly events will be sponsored by DRS and rooms for events will be reserved by Heather Ruiters, Accommodations Specialist for DRS.

Carwein Auditorium will be reserved for singing, sharing musical instruments, drum circle, and dance/movement. MAT 107 will be reserved for painting and sculpting. Center for Equity and Inclusion (CEI) space in Snoqualmie library, room 150 will be reserved for creative writing and sharing stories and poetry. All UW protocols and rules will be followed. Tables for food may be set up outside after each monthly event for participants to enjoy.

Equipment

Equipment will include Djembe drums and Nataraj tranquility drums for students who do not have their own. There will also be bins containing materials for making simple instruments such as rain sticks, spin drums, and rainbow water xylophones.

Budget

Please see Appendix C for complete budget breakdown. The budget outlines the costs of outgoing expenses for personnel and equipment as well as potential sources of funding and in-kind donations,.

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Appendix A

Data Collection Worksheet

Outcomes & Criteria	Tools	Data Collection Process	Data Collection Method	Validity
<p>Be sure to answer for each Outcome and Indicator</p> <p>Outcome 1: A dedicated, sensory-friendly space will exist, both on the UWT campus in Carwein Auditorium and for the larger surrounding community online through Meetup for neurodivergent students to socialize through arts-based activities.</p> <p>Indicator A: A UWT student can book any room on campus by contacting DRS. Students can also set up the room to be a sensory-friendly space. Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus will be launched through Zoom online through the Meetup platform.</p> <p>Criteria to achieve indicator A: A student in a leadership position within Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus has contacted DRS and has provided necessary information to book a room on campus.</p>	<p>Discuss only the tools used to measure the outcomes and indicators listed on the left</p> <p>Outcome 1: (List tool and why selected): Tool 1a: A student who agrees to accept a leadership position so that they can book a room on campus and commit to providing a sensory-friendly space.</p> <p>Tool 1b: A survey students can complete to indicate their approval of sensory-friendly accommodations.</p> <p>Outcome 2: (List tool and why selected) Tool 2a: A pre and post surveys or interviews with BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, to get direct feedback on:</p>	<p>Process used to collect data</p> <p>Who - Who collects the Data? Gabrielle M. Miller and others in student leadership positions.</p> <p>When – At what points in time is the data collected? Before event is launched on either the UWT Campus or on the Meetup platform.</p> <p>After surveys or interviews are completed by neurodivergent students who are interested in participating.</p>	<p>Do you gather data on ALL Clients?</p> <p>YES or NO No</p> <p>If NO, what SAMPLE STRATEGY do you use? (Random, Stratified, etc.) I am planning to use purposive sampling to inform my intervention by doing in-depth interviews with 7-10 neurodivergent students at UWT, who will provide their experiences with inclusion and exclusion before and after they participated in Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus.</p> <p>What is your RATIONALE for using the identified strategy? Purposive sampling entails choosing individuals from</p>	<p>Identify step(s) to ensure (List the most important - at least one step for each tool)</p> <p>(Please list out the steps – narrative is not necessary)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Member checking – I will seek student input on the questions survey involving sensory-friendly accommodations from the survey. Pilot testing – this means sending out surveys to just a few students to see if the questions are working in terms of clarity, comprehension, and the time it takes to complete the survey. <p style="text-align: center;">Reliability</p> <p>Identify step(s) to ensure (List the most important - at least one step for each tool)</p> <p>(Please list out the steps – narrative is not necessary)</p>

<p>Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus is also launched on Zoom through the Meetup platform.</p> <p>Indicator B: UWT neurodivergent student's approve of sensory-friendly accommodations.</p> <p>Criteria to achieve indicator B: After the first gathering of Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus, students have completed an anonymous survey and approved sensory-friendly accommodations.</p> <p>Outcome 2: BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, at UWT will feel included, safe, and supported by each other and confident in expressing themselves and connecting socially through music and other arts-based activities.</p> <p>Indicator A: Positive feedback from BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, through surveys or interviews.</p> <p>Criteria to achieve indicator A:</p>	<p>1. what they hope to experience through participating in Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus before they participate, as well as 2. what they experienced after participating in Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus.</p> <p>Tool 2b: A follow-up interview with students who have participated in the intervention to see if they feel more confident, comfortable, and more included on the UWT campus and in the surrounding neurodivergent and neurotypical community.</p>		<p>a population who have several characteristics in common. Consistent with this goal, I have intentionally chosen the BIPOC neurodivergent student population as well as the white neurodivergent student population to search for themes and characteristics that integrate these two perspectives. Furthermore, if individuals I initially contact are not able to participate, I plan to use snowball sampling to find other students who may be interested in being interviewed.</p>	<p><u>Debriefing with the group</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Expectations versus experience during participation. 2. Leadership preparation to facilitate the group and manage the flow of contribution and activities. 3. Consistency in the use of terms such as "healing" and "community".
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<p>A well-designed set of open-ended interview questions or survey questions. Positive feedback from surveys or interview results confirm the desired objective.</p> <p>Indicator B: The UWT neurodivergent student population reports feeling confident, included, and supported by each other and welcomes new students to join Square Pegs Community Arts on Campus.</p> <p>Criteria to achieve indicator B: Interviews indicating student satisfaction before and after the intervention.</p>				
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Appendix B

Logic Model

<p>Needs Statement: UW Tacoma BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, need a safe, judgement-free, sensory-friendly community arts space to decrease dropout rates and end feelings of rejections and isolation that may lead to more serious mental health issues.</p> <p>Mission Statement: Our mission is to build a culturally sensitive, socially connected neurodivergent student community by sharing and creating music and art together.</p>						
Theory & Key Assumptions	Resources	Activities (Process objectives)	Outputs * (Outcome/Summative Objectives)	Outcomes (Short Term Goals)	Outcome Indicators* (Outcome/Summative Objectives)	Long Term Goal
<p>Feminist Standpoint theory: supports the need to amplify the voices of the neurodivergent population at UW Tacoma from their standpoint.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Community music practice (CoMP): supports learning developed through culture</p>	<p>Designated sensory-friendly space on campus that can accommodate the sounds of music without disturbing classrooms or offices.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Hand drums for a drum circle.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Square Pegs Meetup online</p>	<p>Activity 1: Anonymous survey asking what sensory sensitivities UWT neurodivergent students have and what accommodations are needed.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Activity 2: Group discussion about UWT student participant's favorite music and how it is meaningful to them and</p>	<p>Output 1: Survey is completed and sensory accommodations are implemented.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Output 2: Once a month, every other month, favorite music and how it is meaningful is shared with the group and</p>	<p><u>Outcome 1:</u> A dedicated, sensory-friendly space will exist, both on the UWT campus and in the larger surrounding community through Meetup for neurodivergent students to socialize through arts-based activities.</p> <p>-----</p>	<p><u>Indicator 1a.</u> UWT administration has committed in writing to providing a sensory-friendly space on campus.</p> <p><u>Indicator 1b.</u> UWT neurodivergent student's approve of sensory-friendly accommodations.</p> <p>-----</p> <p><u>Indicator 2a.</u> Positive feedback from</p>	<p>All UW Tacoma BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, will have a safe, sensory friendly space to socialize and gather for community arts-based activities.</p>

<p>and is created through a shared experience.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Black Feminist Empowerment theory: focuses on the strengths of Black women and girls, and emphasizes the importance of collaboration and equality.</p>	<p>platform for a community arts program.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>BIPOC leadership to facilitate both in-person, online, and hybrid group gatherings.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Guest speaker: Board Certified Neurologic Music Therapist: Megumi Azekawa.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Funding to purchase hand drums, materials to make simple rhythm instruments, and to pay guest speakers.</p>	<p>making space for singing along.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Activity 2a: Using a trauma informed care approach, establish a safe space and perimeters for sharing emotions that may arise from discussions about how and why participant's favorite music in meaningful.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Activity 3: Group discussion about UWT student's favorite musical instruments</p>	<p>UWT students find connections with each other in learning about each other's preferences and sharing recordings of musical preferences and singing along in some cases.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Output 2a: UWT BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, feel safe in sharing traumatic experiences connected to why their favorite music is meaningful to them.</p>	<p><u>Outcome 2:</u> BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, at UWT will feel included, safe, and supported by each other and confident in expressing themselves and connecting socially through music and other arts-based activities.</p>	<p>BIPOC neurodivergent students, including white neurodivergent students, through surveys or interviews.</p> <p><u>Indicator 2b.</u> Drop-out rates in the UWT neurodivergent student population are decreased.</p>	
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		<p>and how they are meaningful.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Activity 4: Group drum circle led by Rain Wilson both online sessions and in-person sessions.</p>	<p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Output 3: UWT students share their instruments with each other either through recordings or through playing or demonstrating their musical instrument once a month, every other month. This is a continuation of the first meeting where students share musical preferences and sing along with favorite songs.</p> <p>-----</p> <p>-----</p> <p>Output 4: UWT neurodivergent students connect socially through drum circle and share creative</p>			
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			rhythm ideas once a month, every other month.			
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Appendix C

Budget Table

Resource	Hours/ Mo.	Cost	Funding Source
<u>Marketing Manager</u> (1 volunteer asst) [4 - 6 hours] <u>Operations Manager</u> (2 volunteer asst) [3 - 5 hours] <u>Treasurer</u> [5 – 6 hours] <u>Drum Circle Facilitator</u> [4 - 6 hours] <u>Music & Art Facilitator</u> [4 - 6 hours]	20 hours per month total	\$200 x 5 BIPOC Leadershi p Roles = \$1000/mo nth x 7 months = \$7000	Husky Seed Fund
Hand Drums (6 Nataraj Tongue Drums [\$1500] + 6 Djembe Drums [\$1147])		\$2647	Simon Family Endowment
Arts & Crafts Supplies to make simple instruments (e.g. rain sticks, spin drums, water xylophones, etc.)		\$500 plus In-Kind Donations	Husky Seed Fund
Food (students and staff bring special food to share from their culture)		\$353	
Beverages/Ice/Cooler/Paper plates, plastic flatware, and cups		\$500	Husky Seed Fund
Total Resources		\$11,000	Husky Seed Fund & Simon Family Endowment