

Children's Music and Limited English Proficient Students:

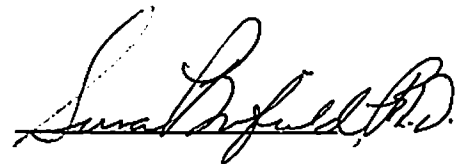
A focus on educational techniques used by music educators in parts of the state of

Texas

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Dr. Susan Brumfield

The quality of education in the United States of America has always been a top priority. Here in Texas, we strive to provide every opportunity conceivable to our students. The Texas Education Agency has made it a point to establish guidelines and procedures that regulate every aspect of education, except those procedures governing the Limited English Proficient (L.E.P.) student in the musical classroom. As the population of L. E. P. students increases, more and more music educators are reaching an impasse. One common question is: "How do we teach these students?" Although the primary goal in the music classroom is not the acquisition of language, the understanding of music can help the L. E. P. student to further his or her English skills. Music educators in Texas have been resourceful in the ways in which they educate L. E. P. students in their discipline. A study of the methods used by these music educators has revealed some insight into how they are unknowingly furthering the goals of both the English as a Second Language (E. S. L.) and Bilingual Education programs.

What are the E. S. L. and Bilingual Education programs? In September of 1996 the Texas Education Agency adopted a policy creating these programs.

"It is the policy of the state that every student in the state who has a home language other than English and who is identified as limited English proficient shall be provided a full opportunity to participate in a bilingual education or English as a second language program. To ensure equal educational opportunity each school district shall:

1. identify limited English proficient students based on criteria established by the state;
2. provide bilingual education and English as a second language programs, as integral parts of the regular program as described in the Texas Education Code;
3. seek certified teaching personnel to ensure that limited English proficient students are afforded full opportunity to master the essential skills and knowledge required by the state; and
4. assess achievement for essential skills and knowledge in accordance with the Texas Education Code, Chapter 39, to ensure accountability for limited English proficient students and the schools that serve them.”¹

The goals of the E. S. L. and bilingual education programs are the same. Both aspire to enable L. E. P. students to become competent in the comprehension, speaking, reading and composition of the English language. While the methodologies may be different, both programs address the history and cultural heritage associated with both the students’ home language and the United States. This dispels the myth that the programs are trying to assimilate the L. E. P. student into the American culture while destroying the student’s own culture.

¹ United States. Texas Education Agency. Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part II
89.1201. Policy

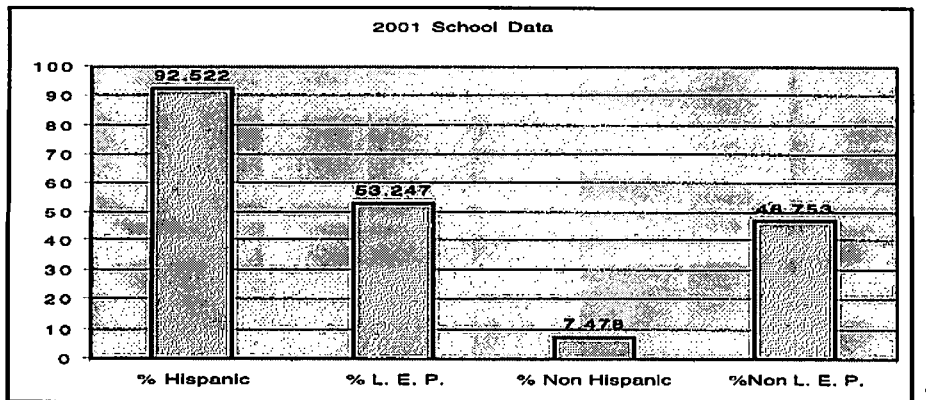
According to the Texas Education Agency, “Each school district required to offer a bilingual education or English as a second language program shall provide each limited English proficient student the opportunity to be enrolled in the required program at his or her grade level. Each student's level of proficiency shall be designated by the language proficiency assessment committee in accordance with §89.1220(g) of this title (relating to Language Proficiency Assessment Committee). The district shall modify the instruction, pacing, and materials to ensure that limited English proficient students have a full opportunity to master the essential knowledge and skills of the required curriculum. Students participating in the bilingual education program may demonstrate their mastery of the essential knowledge and skills in either their home language or in English for each content area.”² In regard to the fine arts, the agency states, “In subjects such as art, music, and physical education, the limited English proficient students shall participate with their English-speaking peers in regular classes provided in the subjects. The district shall ensure that students enrolled in bilingual education and English as a second language programs have a meaningful opportunity to participate with other students in all extracurricular activities.”³ These vague guidelines are left to the interpretation and discretion of the teacher. If the L. E. P. student is to actively participate in the musical experience, the Texas Education Agency will need to define certain guidelines and resources for both the teacher and the school district.

According to the Texas Education Agency, the number of L. E. P. students in the Texas public school system is significant. The following graph was compiled from 100

² Texas Education Agency 89.1210 a

³ Texas Education Agency 89.1210 f

Texas public schools with a total population of 53,514 students.



The statistics show that over half of the student population of these 100 schools is classified as L. E. P. Every single one of these students is attending a school program whose curriculum includes music education. There are at least 100 music educators in the state of Texas that instruct L. E. P. students. All of these educators must rely on their own resourcefulness to develop lesson plans that include L. E. P. students. How can we insure that these students are getting the best possible education if there is no set curriculum?

A survey was conducted of the music teachers at the schools in the above demographic. 25 % of the surveys were returned. The information produced from these 25 surveys concludes that 25 out of 100 music teachers in the state of Texas:

- 1 do not understand their role as a music educator in the E. S. L. program
- 2 have students classified as L. E. P. in the classroom
- 3 have no set curriculum or modifications for their L. E. P. students
- 4 would like a set curriculum and resource guide to implement in their classroom

⁴ United States. Texas Education Agency. Academic Excellence Indicator System.

When asked about their thoughts of the usage of singing games and folk music to further the goals of the E. S. L. program, 100% of the educators felt that there was something to offer. Currently, music educators throughout the state use Spanish folk music and singing games to include the L. E. P. students in the musical experience. Most of the L. E. P. students are from Mexico. A typical lesson would include the learning of a Spanish song followed by the translation of the song into English. This not only helps the L. E. P. student to build an English vocabulary, but it presents the musical objectives in a comfortable manner. There are many possibilities when it comes to using folk music in the music classroom in regards to the L. E. P. student.

The battle between music educators thirsting for a set of guidelines and a demanding Texas Education Agency may well be a never-ending struggle. The music education profession seems to be in a state of limbo in which no advancements can be made as long as the governing education agency continues to neglect the needs of its educators. But the fact remains that these music teachers regardless of help from the state government must continue educating themselves and acquiring new resources. What is to become of the L. E. P. student? This question can only be answered by time. If the Texas Education Agency does not recognize the need for a solution the education of these students will be stagnant and the agency will continue to contradict the goals it has set forth.

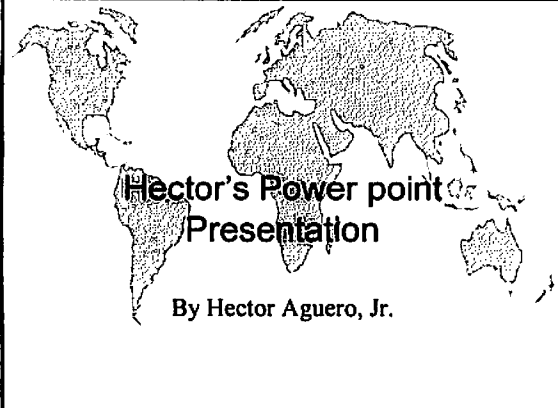
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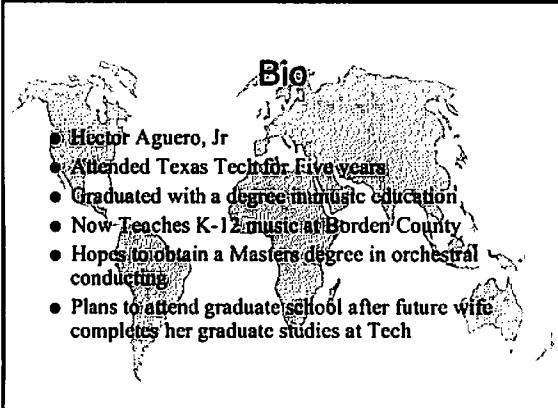


Hector's Power point Presentation

By Hector Aguero, Jr.

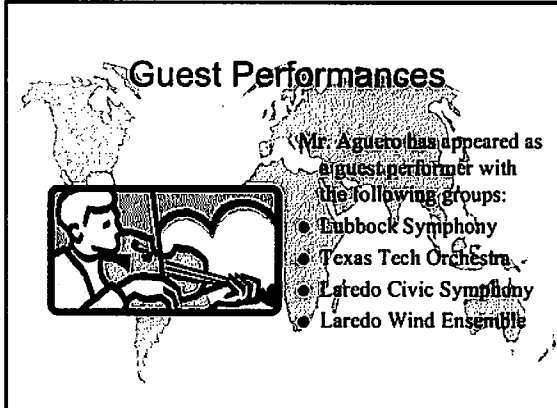


Produced to satisfy the McNair program requirements on the knowledge and use of the Power point program.




Bio:

- Hector Aguero, Jr
- Attended Texas Tech for five years
- Graduated with a degree in music education
- Now Teaches K-12 music at Borden County
- Hopes to obtain a Masters degree in orchestral conducting
- Plans to attend graduate school after future wife completes her graduate studies at Tech

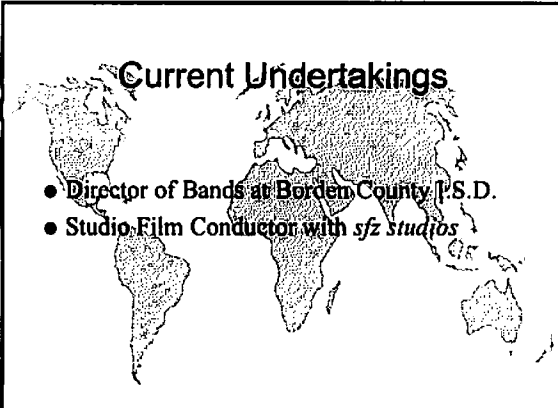


Guest Performances



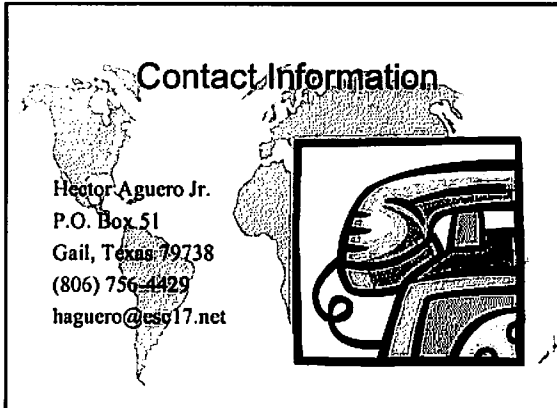
Mr. Aguero has appeared as a guest performer with the following groups:

- Lubbock Symphony
- Texas Tech Orchestra
- Laredo Civic Symphony
- Laredo Wind Ensemble



Current Undertakings

- Director of Bands at Borden County P.S.D.
- Studio Film Conductor with sfz studios



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