



Music: Music and Creativity

What if music made children think about where creativity came from?

Joanne's kindergarten class loved music time, and she wanted them to appreciate their own creative ability and to think about where it comes from. Since Joanne teaches in a Christian school, she talked about creativity as a gift from God.

"I began by changing the visual impact of the room. I put up lots of patterns made from colored dots of different sizes. I made sure everything looked exciting.

"I gave the children bunches of squares cut out of construction paper as well as an assortment of musical instruments. First, their squares were all mixed up, so I asked them to sort them out and make a pattern.

"Then we made random sounds with the instruments and compared them to the mixed-up squares. I recorded their sounds so that we could assign colors to different instruments and create a color-sound pattern, which we recorded with our paper squares.

"We added different-sized squares, small ones for quiet sounds and big ones for loud sounds, and recorded our pattern. We listened to the recordings, heard how we had created a pattern of sounds, and then clapped for ourselves. I talked to the children about our ability to be creative and asked where they thought that ability came from. I shared the Christian belief that it comes from God, the creator who made the bird's song and the lion's roar."

What's going on here?

Joanne saw her music lesson as a chance for her class not only to be aware of and delight in their ability to be creative, but also to think about where that ability comes from, connecting with faith and big questions.

She engaged her students in exploring patterns and creativity through various media (color, dots) and in making connections so they could ask big questions about life, faith and values.

Joanne reshaped her practice by using the classroom environment (displays, use of color) as well as objects and sounds to create a particular atmosphere (exploration, creativity), by guiding student interaction (group exploration), by planning a sequence that would provoke insights, by planning for student reflection (playing their sounds back to them), and by making explicit connections to faith.

What does this have to do with faith, hope, and love?

Christian faith includes the belief that God made people in a particular way. The book of Genesis describes God as the creator who made a beautiful and complex world. Genesis goes on to say that God made people a little like God in some way. This is called being made in the image of God. Our creative ability may be connected with our nature as images of God.

What difference does it make?

By drawing the children's attention to their creativity through the way she designed the lesson, Joanne created a natural context for asking where this ability comes from. There are lots of lessons for creativity, but often we don't stop to ask about its source.

Where could we go from here?

Scholars have debated what the "image of God" is for many years. Some have suggested creativity as one aspect of it. Some have pointed to reasoning, our ability to choose between right and wrong, our capacity for love and forming complex relationships, and our ability to self-reflect. Others see imaging God as a task or responsibility in which all of these human abilities are used to carry out God's calling. Various aspects of what it means to be human could be explored in different parts of the curriculum in connection with our relationship to God.

Digging deeper

In Genesis we see God bringing creative order out of chaos and creating a world of immense variety ([Genesis 1:1](#)). Human beings are made in the image of God ([Genesis 1:27](#)). Scholars differ in how they understand what being made in the image of God means; it could be our creativity, reasoning, our role in bringing order in the world, our ability to make moral decisions and our social relationships, or the tasks to which God calls us. God is a creator, and in a more limited sense we too can use our creative abilities to bring beauty and order out of chaos.

The widest thing in the universe is not space; it is the potential capacity of the human heart. Being made in the image of God, it is capable of almost unlimited extension in all directions. And one of the world's worst tragedies is that we allow our hearts to shrink until there is room in them for little besides ourselves. A. W. Tozer

Being made in the image of God is a very big concept. People as a whole are made in the image of God, not just one bit of them. Being made in God's image is about reflecting a little of God to the world.



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