

Assignment Q: Invitations

Invitations provide an opportunity to reach out to all students and teach them new thinking skills and self-directed learning. Instead of using a prescribed process, students have the chance to decide what they want to know about a topic and how they will find that knowledge. This is particularly significant to diverse classrooms because it breaks the one-size-fits all model of many curriculums. The goal is pure learning and growth without a checklist of goals that must be accomplished in order to count as “learning.”

For example, the chapter on setting up invitations provides the example of an invitation to explore art and its meaning. Art is a broad topic that can include visual art, literary art, musical art, etc. It does not specify how the students need to explore art, it merely invites them to do so. Some may do so by passively consuming art, such as reading a poem or looking at a painting. Others may take a more active approach and try creating art with meaning by painting a picture or writing a song. Still others may wish to discuss the topic firsthand with an artist. The wonderful part of invitations is that it may provide suggestions and starting points, but it is open-ended; it expects students to use their own interests and their own strengths in discovering more about the world.

For my own invitation, I am considering inviting children to explore the different purposes of music. Different types of music play different roles in our lives and our different cultures. Some music is meant for dancing and other music might be meant for rocking a baby to sleep. I would invite students to think about the following questions:

- What are all the different roles you can think of that music plays?
- What roles do different kinds of music play in your life?
- What is similar about music that is used in the same role?
- Is the role more important, or the music?
- How do people learn about using music for a specific role?

For resources, I would provide children’s books that include lullabies, the alphabet song, and holiday songs. I would also provide a list of YouTube videos (featuring work songs, spirituals, folk dances, ballet, movie soundtracks, etc.) and a list of songs and pieces to explore in other ways.