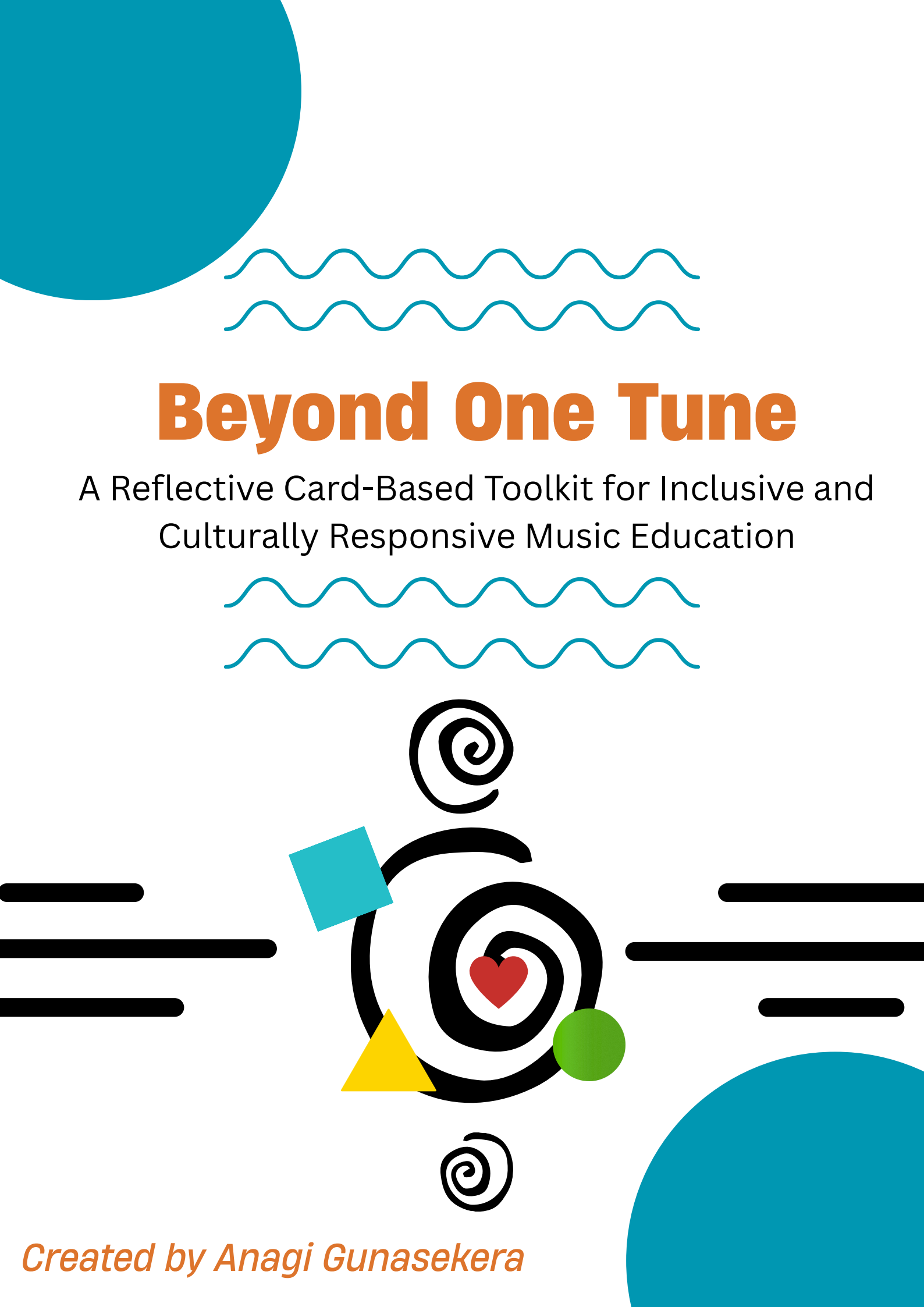
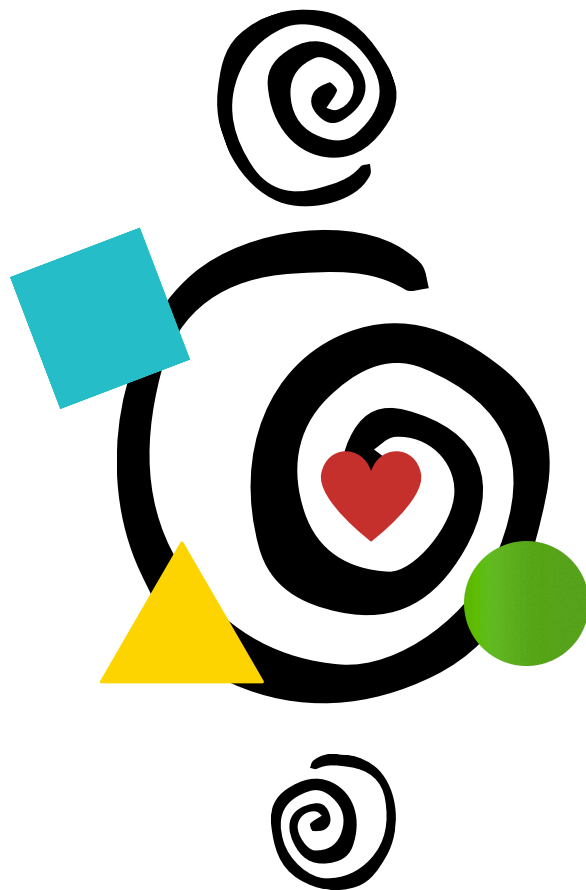
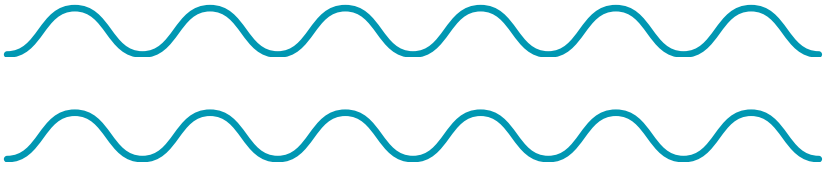




Beyond One Tune

A Reflective Card-Based Toolkit for Inclusive and
Culturally Responsive Music Education



Created by Anagi Gunasekera

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, and skies on which this resource was developed.

We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to Country, community, and culture. We recognise that this is Indigenous land, and that sovereignty was never ceded.

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first musicians, storytellers, and knowledge holders of this land, whose ways of knowing, being, and learning are grounded in deep relationships with Country.

We recognise that we are working within an ongoing context shaped by colonisation, where these relationships have been disrupted and Indigenous voices have not always been heard.

This resource is guided by an ongoing commitment to reflection, learning, and decolonising practice. It seeks to engage respectfully and ethically with Indigenous knowledges and sovereignties while encouraging educators to question the assumptions, traditions, and systems that shape what is valued, taught, and heard in music education.

Starting with Acknowledgement

This toolkit begins with an Acknowledgement of Country because inclusive practice starts with knowing where we are, whose Country we are on, and what histories shape the places where we teach and learn.

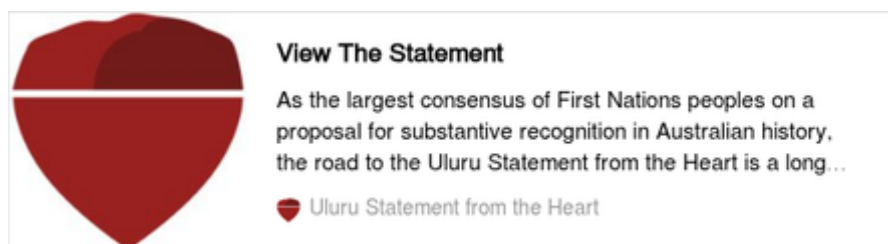
Before moving into the cards, take a moment to reflect on the Country you are teaching on. Learn about its histories, communities, and continuing cultures.

Think about what it means to teach music on Indigenous lands where sovereignty was never ceded.

Acknowledgement can be a starting point for deeper reflection. It invites you to question assumptions, listen carefully, and consider how Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing can be engaged with respectfully, contextually, and meaningfully.

As Ramos (2024) reminds us, this means connecting with the intent behind an Acknowledgement and understanding its impact through reflection, respect, and awareness of the Country you are on.

Useful starting points:



Introduction

Beyond One Tune is designed for you whether you are a music teacher, pre-service teacher, or educator interested in more inclusive ways of teaching and learning.

This toolkit uses a set of cards and this supporting guide to encourage you to look beyond just one way of hearing, teaching, valuing, or understanding music.

Sometimes music education can be shaped by expectations about what counts as “musical,” how students should take part, or what success is supposed to look like. This resource invites you to pause, notice those expectations, and think about what else might be possible.

You do not need to change everything at once. This toolkit is a starting point to ask thoughtful questions, try small changes, and grow your confidence in more inclusive, accessible, and culturally responsive ways of teaching.

At times, this may feel unfamiliar. It may mean sitting with uncertainty, questioning what feels normal, or trying approaches that feel a little uncomfortable at first. But that kind of reflection can be valuable. It can open up new ways of thinking about music, learning, participation, and belonging.

Sometimes one new question, one redesigned activity, or one small moment of reflection can begin to shift the classroom in meaningful ways.

This toolkit is here to support that process. It is here to help you reflect, respond, and reimagine music education beyond one tune.

How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to be returned to over time. Rather than using it once and putting it away, you might come back to it regularly by reading through the cards, sitting with the questions, making notes, revisiting ideas, researching concepts further, and noticing what stands out in different moments of your teaching.

You do not need to use the whole toolkit at once. You might begin with one card, return to it later, or explore a few cards over time as your thinking develops.

The aim is not to move through everything quickly, but to use the cards as a way of supporting ongoing reflection, curiosity, growth, and deeper exploration.

The 3 types of cards

Reflect cards

These cards invite you to pause and think more deeply about key ideas in music education, such as identity, access, participation, culture, and expression. They can be used on their own, or as lenses for thinking through a classroom situation.

Respond cards

These are scenario cards. They are included to show what this kind of reflective thinking might look like in practice. They are to help you think through common tensions that can arise in music education. Rather than jumping to conclusions, they encourage you to consider different possibilities, question assumptions, and reflect on how you might approach the situation.

Reimagine cards

These cards invite you to think ahead. They focus on possibilities for redesigning learning more intentionally, and can help you move from reflection toward future action in your planning and practice.

Using the cards

You can use the cards in different ways depending on what feels most helpful for your context. There is no fixed order. You can move between them in ways that support your thinking.

1. Individual Use (card-by-card)

- Use one card at a time to pause and reflect on your teaching
- Use the Dig Deeper sections in this guide to explore the ideas behind the Reflect cards
- Sit with the questions, make notes, and think through your practice
- Return to the same card over time and notice what shifts in your thinking

2. Using the cards in combination

- Match a Respond card with one or more Reflect cards to think through a situation from different angles
- Move from a Reflect card to a Reimagine card to think about future possibilities in your teaching
- Pair a Respond card with a Reimagine card to consider how a classroom tension might lead to a different approach
- Use all three together to reflect, respond, and reimagine your practice

3. Professional conversations

- The cards can also be used as conversation starters.
- Use them with colleagues, other music teachers, or pre-service teachers
- Share perspectives and explore different responses to the same card
- Use them in team planning, professional learning, or discussion groups

Dig Deeper: Reflect Cards

Music as Identity

This card invites reflection on **intersectionality**, the idea that identity is shaped by overlapping social and cultural experiences, rather than by a single category alone.

Students do not enter the classroom only as “learners”; they bring with them identities shaped by culture, race, language, gender, class, ability, religion, family, and lived experience. These intersections can shape not only how students experience music, but also whether they feel recognised within it.

You might also use tools such as the wheel of power and privilege to reflect on whose identities are centred, whose are marginalised, and how power can shape participation, confidence, and recognition in the classroom.

Music as Expression & Voice

This card is about student voice, but voice is not only about speaking. It asks both how students are invited to express themselves and what they are able to express. In music classrooms, expression is often shaped by hidden expectations about what counts as appropriate, musical, creative, or skilled. Some students may have strong ideas but not express them through conventional forms such as notation, performance, or verbal discussion.

This can also be an opportunity to explore different pedagogical approaches that support diverse ways of expressing and making meaning. For example, 8 Aboriginal Ways of Learning emphasise story, symbols, non-verbal communication, and learning through connection and experience.

This card also asks what kinds of ideas students are allowed to bring into the room. Meaningful voice may include joy, identity, culture, disagreement, uncertainty, discomfort, or reflections on bias and exclusion. Sometimes these conversations can feel unsettling, especially when they involve racism, prejudice, colonial histories, or whose music and knowledge have been valued or silenced.

A **pedagogy of discomfort** can help educators approach these moments with care. Rather than avoiding difficult conversations, it encourages teachers and students to sit with discomfort, question assumptions, and turn tension into a space for reflection, dialogue, agency, and deeper understanding.

This also connects to whose voices are amplified beyond the classroom. Inclusive music education should not only make space for the students already present, but also recognise Indigenous, cultural, disabled, LGBTQ+, and other marginalised voices that have often been excluded from dominant music education narratives.

This card invites educators to think about voice as expression, representation, and responsibility: how students express, what they express, and whose voices are heard, valued, and amplified.

Music as Belonging and Participation

This card asks teachers to think about the difference between participation and belonging. A student may be present, compliant, or even actively involved, while still feeling unseen, unsafe, or unsure if they truly belong.

Belonging is shaped through everyday relationships, language, and classroom climate. The way teachers speak, respond, give feedback, and set expectations can influence who feels recognised and valued.

Using **strength-based and inclusive language** can help students feel seen for what they bring, rather than judged against a fixed idea of what a “good” music student should look like. The [Australian Government Style Manual](#) is a great starting point to learn about inclusive language.

This card invites you to notice the small signals students receive in the classroom: whose identities are recognised, whose ways of participating feel welcome, and who may feel pressure to adapt in order to belong.

Music as Access

This card invites reflection on how access is shaped not only by individual needs, but by how learning environments are designed and expected to operate.

Learner difference is often framed through a deficit lens, where difficulty is seen as a problem within the student. This is linked to the **medical model of disability**, which focuses on what the learner cannot do. In music classrooms, this can mean that students who do not fit dominant expectations around listening, performance, communication, or sensory engagement are treated as problems to be accommodated.

The **social model of disability** shifts this perspective by focusing on the barriers created by environments, systems, and expectations. From this view, access is not something added afterwards, but something that shapes planning from the beginning.

In practice, this may involve offering different ways for students to engage, such as adjusting sound levels, using noise-reducing supports, providing varied instruments or digital tools, or presenting information in accessible formats. These small design choices can make participation more possible for a wider range of learners.

This also invites reflection on **ableism**, and how certain ways of learning and participating are often assumed to be more normal or valued than others.

Music as Culture

This card invites reflection on how music is understood and represented in the classroom. Some musical traditions may be treated as the norm, while others are positioned as add-ons or occasional topics.

Curriculum is not neutral. It reflects choices about what is valued, and can reproduce assumptions by centring some traditions while marginalising others.

Decolonising the music curriculum is not about rejecting Western traditions, but about recognising them as one of many. It involves moving beyond simply adding diverse repertoire, towards embedding and normalising a wider range of musical practices in everyday learning.

Music is shaped by many cultures, histories, and ways of knowing. Inclusive practice involves valuing this diversity and creating space for multiple musical traditions to be recognised and respected.

A **Culturally Responsive Approach** also encourages teachers to see students' cultural knowledge, experiences, and stories as strengths, and to engage with culture in ways that are respectful, relational, and meaningful.

Note on including First Nations Music

When engaging with First Nations knowledges and musical practices:

- Who is speaking, and who might not be being heard?
- Am I creating space for Indigenous voices, or speaking over them?
- Where does this material come from, and who has been consulted?
- Is this engagement respectful, relational, and based on appropriate permission?
- Does this approach recognise strengths, knowledge, and resilience?

Working with cultural knowledge involves responsibility. It requires listening, ongoing reflection, and a willingness to shift your practice over time. (Adapted from Kwaymullina, 2020)

Further Reading/References

8 Ways. (n.d.). *Aboriginal pedagogy*.

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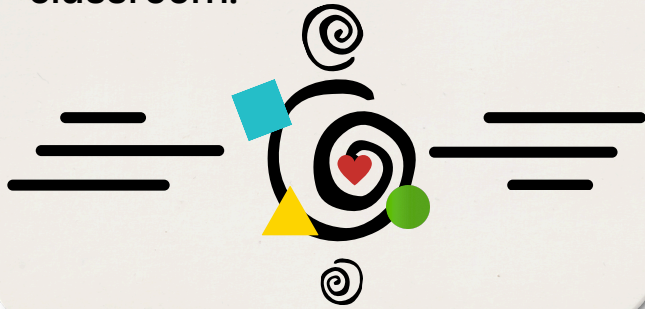
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Reflect Cards

Music as Identity

Music is not just a skill. It reflects who we are, where we come from, and what matters to us. Every student brings layered and intersecting identities into the classroom.



Reflect

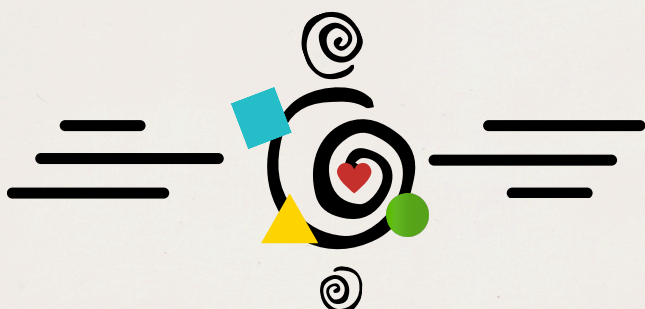
- Whose identities are visible, centred, or absent in this learning?
- How might intersecting aspects of identity (e.g. culture, language, gender, ability, experience) shape how students connect with this music?
- Are students able to recognise themselves in what is being taught?
- How are students' identities and lived experiences recognised as strengths in the classroom?
- How might your own identity and experiences influence what you value or prioritise in the classroom?

Try this:

Invite students to connect music to their own lived experiences or identities.

Music as Expression & Voice

Music offers many ways to express ideas, feelings, and meaning, but not all students are equally heard, invited in, or valued.



Reflect

- What forms of expression are encouraged, and which are overlooked?
- Are students shaping the learning, or only responding to it?
- Are there multiple ways for students to communicate meaning beyond traditional musical forms?
- Do students feel able to express ideas that differ from expectations or norms?
- Are all forms of expression valued equally, or are some treated as more legitimate than others?

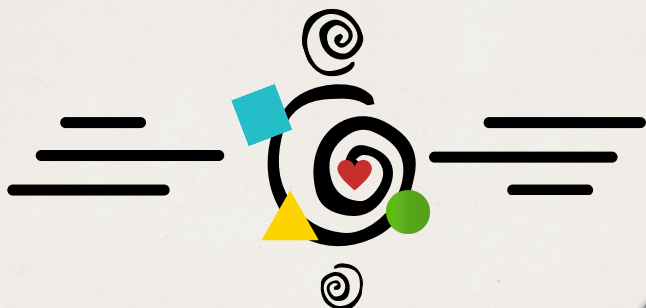
Try this:

Offer more than one way for students to express meaning. For example through sound, movement, visuals, storytelling, or digital creation.

Reflect Cards

Music as Belonging and Participation

Being present is not the same as belonging. Participation can appear active on the surface but still feel unsafe or limited.



Reflect

- Who feels comfortable in this space, and who might not? Why?
- How do my relationships with students support or limit their sense of belonging?
- What messages do my words and responses send about who is valued?
- Am I using language that is inclusive, respectful, and strength-based?
- Do students feel safe to be themselves, take risks, and make mistakes?

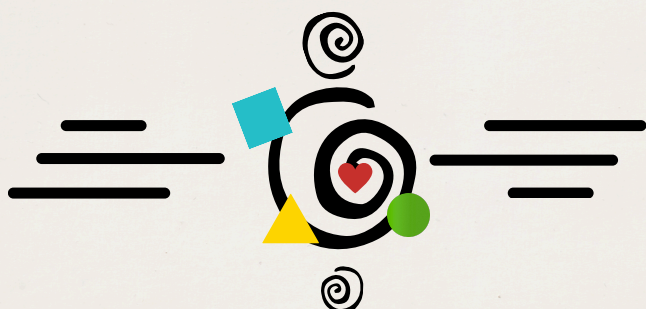
Try this:

Focus on one small shift in classroom climate. For example:

- use strength-based language when giving feedback
- check your language for inclusivity (e.g. gender, culture, ability)

Music as Access

Music learning is often designed around narrow ways of hearing, performing, and responding.



Reflect

- What modes of learning are prioritised (e.g. listening, notation, performance)?
- What demands does this activity place on students (sensory, physical, social, cognitive)?
- What barriers might exist in the instruments, environment, or instructions?
- Do your expectations assume a 'typical way' of learning or engaging with music?
- Are differences being viewed as something to accommodate, or as strengths to build from?
- What strengths do students bring that may not be recognised in traditional music learning?

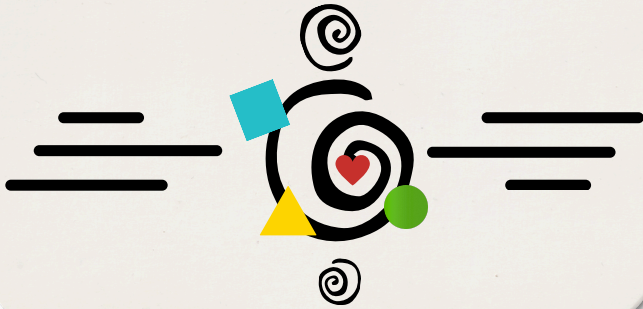
Try this:

Offer at least one alternative way to engage (visual, tactile, movement-based, or digital).

Reflect Cards

Music as Culture

Music is shaped by culture, meaning, and context and not just sound or performance.



Reflect

- How is this music being introduced as content, or as lived cultural practice?
- What context, meaning, or protocols might be missing?
- Does this engagement deepen understanding, or remain surface-level?
- How are students supported to engage respectfully with different musical cultures?
- How are students' cultural knowledge and musical experiences valued as assets in learning?

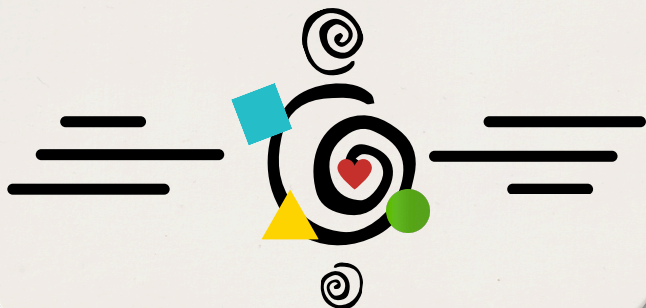
Try this:

Spend time exploring the story, purpose, or context behind the music.

Respond Cards

Situation 1:

During a group music activity, one student stays quiet and avoids joining in, even when encouraged.



What might be going on?

- Uncertainty about expectations or how to begin
- Feeling unsafe, overlooked, or not fully part of the group
- Discomfort with the task, content, or group dynamics
- Past experiences or identity shaping how they participate

You might consider...

- Checking in privately and listening without assumptions
- Offering flexible roles or smaller entry points into the task
- Adjusting group structures to support participation

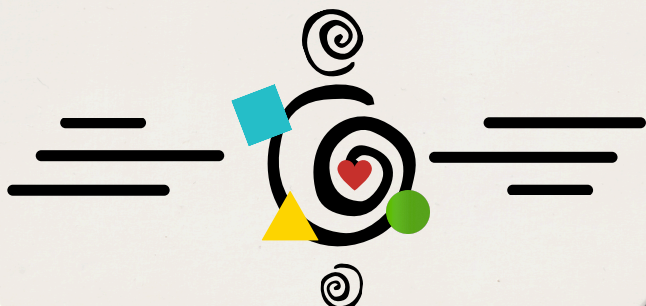


Reflect card links:

- Belonging & Participation
- Access
- Identity

Situation 2:

During a listening or performance activity, some students appear distracted, restless, or less visibly engaged.



What might be going on?

- The activity relies heavily on one mode of engagement
- Sensory, physical, or cognitive demands are too high or too low
- Difficulty connecting with the task or content
- Instructions or expectations may be unclear

You might consider...

- Adding visual, movement, or tactile elements
- Breaking the task into smaller steps
- Offering alternative ways to engage with the same concept



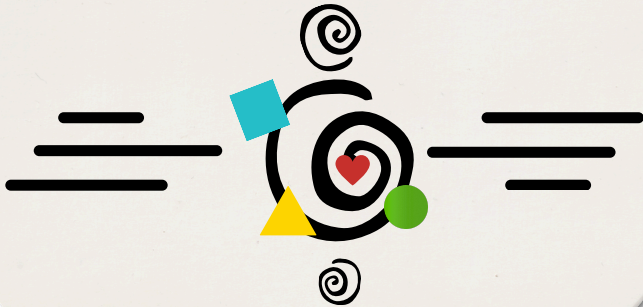
Reflect card links:

- Access
- Belonging & Participation
- Expression & Voice

Respond Cards

Situation 3:

When introduced to unfamiliar music, some students laugh, disengage, or make dismissive comments.



What might be going on?

- Unfamiliarity with the music's meaning or context
- Lack of understanding of its purpose or significance
- Discomfort with difference or unfamiliar sounds
- Influence of dominant musical norms and expectations

You might consider...

- Introducing the context or story before engaging with the music
- Guiding discussion to build curiosity rather than judgement
- Modelling respectful ways of engaging with unfamiliar music



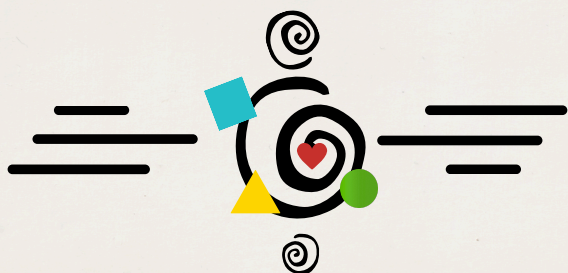
Reflect card links:

- Culture
- Identity
- Belonging & Participation

Reimagine Cards

Reimagine Culture, Knowledge & Representation

What if music learning normalised diverse ways of knowing and representing music, rather than treating them as additions or alternatives?



You might explore...

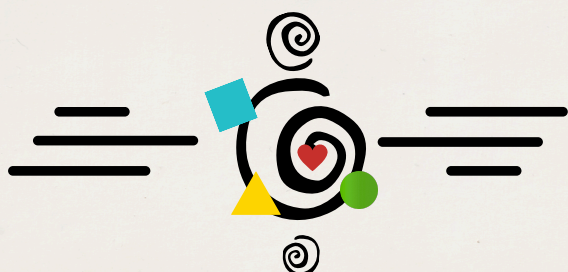
- Embedding First Nations perspectives and pedagogies (e.g. relational, no language learning, story-based, community-connected learning)
- Engaging with music as part of living cultural knowledge systems, not just content
- Representing First Nations, culturally and racially diverse, LGBTQ+, and disabled artists as part of everyday learning
- Approaching music through ethical and respectful engagement, considering who is consulted and how knowledge is shared
- Creating space for students to question and rethink what is treated as normal or valued in music
- Treating diverse musical traditions as part of everyday learning, not special topics

This helps...

Position diversity as normal, valued, and integral to music learning, rather than something added or exceptional.

Reimagine Participation, Creativity & Collective Learning

What if music learning centred joy, play, creativity, and shared meaning-making rather than performance alone?



You might explore...

- Creating space for play, experimentation, imagination, and exploration
- Designing opportunities for collaborative and collective music-making with shared roles
- Supporting student agency, where learners contribute ideas and shape outcomes
- Valuing multiple ways of engaging, including movement, sound exploration, visual or symbolic representation
- Offering flexible tools and materials (e.g. varied instruments, digital options, adapted resources)
- Building in scaffolding and multiple levels of entry, so students can engage in different ways without being singled out
- Shifting from individual performance toward shared creative processes and experiences

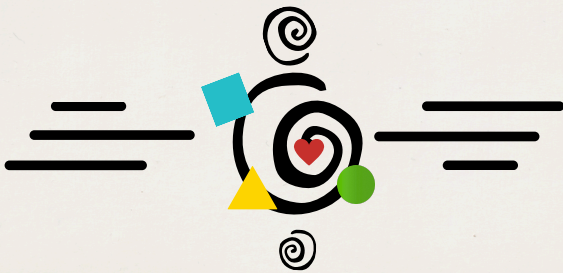
This helps...

Make music learning more inclusive, accessible, and connected to students' strengths and ways of expressing meaning.

Reimagine Cards

Reimagine Musical Success, Language & Dialogue

What if music learning moved away from deficit thinking and narrow ideas of ability toward more inclusive and reflective ways of understanding success?



You might explore...

- Using strength-based and inclusive language that values growth, creativity, and different ways of knowing
- Creating opportunities for respectful and critical dialogue about music, culture, and meaning
- Engaging with a pedagogy of discomfort, where students can question assumptions and encounter difference
- Encouraging students to deconstruct and reconstruct musical knowledge
- Recognising students' existing knowledge, identities, and experiences as assets, not deficits
- Valuing different ways of demonstrating understanding, rather than relying on one standard mode

This helps...

Challenge fixed ideas of ability and create space for deeper, more equitable, and meaningful learning.