

# Utilizing the Resilience Theory to Develop a Popular Music Curriculum in the Secondary Music Classroom

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## 01. INTRODUCTION

Students who endure trauma are oftentimes labeled from the beginning of their educational journey ('at-risk' is one that is replete in academia). This labeling shuts out the potential within the students' journey of resilience. In the 1900's Dr. Norman Garmezy published research that is now known as the 'Resilience Theory'. This theory attempts to explain why some individuals with high vulnerability find success in their outcomes. "[t]he ability of systems to absorb changes... and still persist" (Holling 1973) Resilience is a process; one that we can cultivate and grow. Music educators are in a unique position to help students facing trauma. Typically have students in their classrooms for the full extent of their time within that particular institution, and by tapping into their experiences, teachers can encourage students to have grit-like qualities.

## 02. SELF-EFFICACY/SELF-ESTEEM

Pender's Health Promotion model examines how self-efficacy and resilience interweave. He says that "Individuals, in all their biopsychosocial complexity, interact with the environment, progressively transforming the environment as well as being transformed over time." (Nusing Theory) When students are facing trauma and difficult life circumstances, they often are interacting with environments that aren't conducive of growth and self-efficacy. Adolescents need a space to communicate their struggles, their joys, and pain. Students listen to about 1.5/2 hours of music a day (Jones, 1970)- with rap music taking the lead. Rap therapy is a teaching method that bridges the gap between the environment the student is in (their culture, their music preference), and the skills needed to grow as a musician (understanding rhythm, form, etc). Doing biography projects of popular artists also shows the students the complexities of these individuals that are creating RAP music. Students can write their beats, write their own lyrics, engage with community issues, and create their own stories by engaging with rap music and the poetry that makes up the music. Self-efficacy is believing that you can tackle the situation and hand and plays a vital role in building resilience and grit.



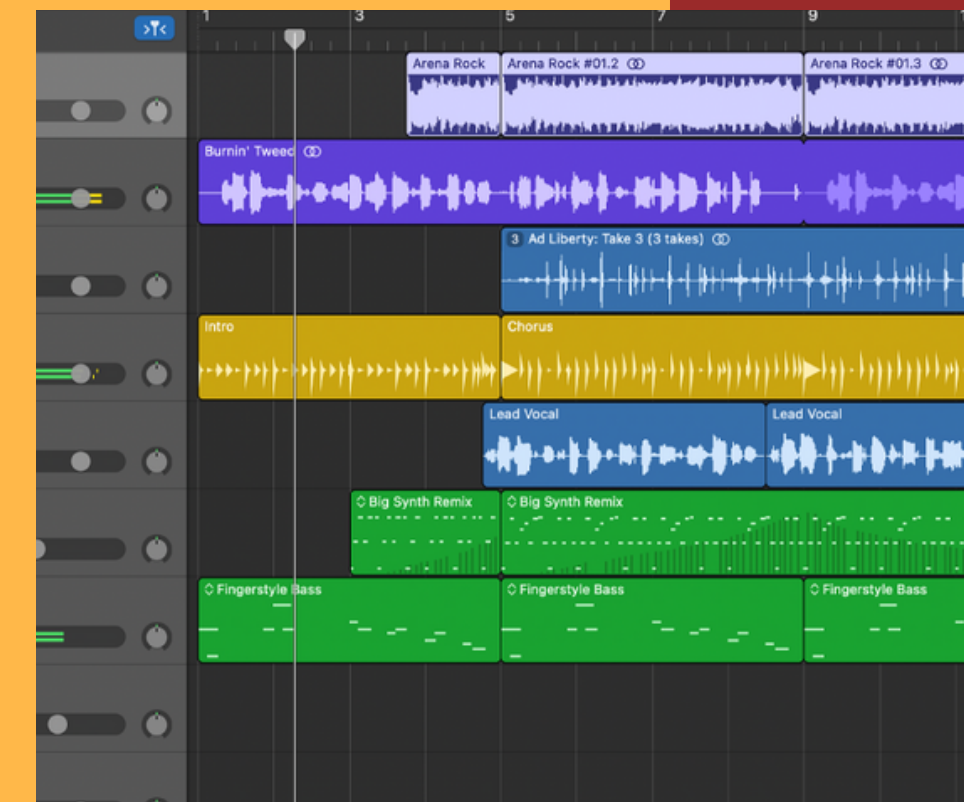
<https://www.vulture.com/article/new-york-rap-songs-ranked.html>

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## 03. INTERNAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Resilience theory emphasizes a strong connection between role-models and the greater community and it's role in dealing with adversity. By utilizing the popular application, GarageBand, students can collaborate within the classroom to create layers of music that culminate into a group 'story'. Group activities such as this one, encourage students to build community within the classroom, and shows them that they are apart of something bigger than themselves. GarageBand as an application has been shown to encourage student participation in music, as the music is closer to what they encounter daily. Layering in these different beats and melodies also show students who are facing trauma that their voice is valuable in community and that they have a story to tell within that environment.



<https://support.apple.com/guide/garageband/what-is-garageband-gbndff5345d9/mac>

## 04. EXTERNAL COMMUNITY-BUILDING

Wayne Bowman said in the *International Journal of Community Music* that 'To understand communities we need to understand the practices that stitch and weave them together.' (Bowman, 2009) Resilience Theory attempts to bridge the gap between the micro and the macro- and by starting community outreach projects in the music classroom- educators show students that they have the agency and capability to engage with and change the community.

## 05. RESULTS

The purpose and outlook of this study is to encourage music educators to create a curriculum that encourages students to have a high level of self-efficacy, be able to engage with their peers within the classroom, and engage with the community, all while tapping into the musical experiences of the students. Music educators have the power to shape students' perception, and when students are facing traumatic experiences, transfers can be made to between popular music, and the skills necessary to build resiliency.