

Beat the Odds Full Testimonials: Masterlist

Click [here](#) for a remarkable videotaped on Beat the Odds by Mr. Soqui, a teacher from Newhall School District, who shares the benefits to his classroom.

Unsolicited message from Dr. Deborah Bohn, Principal of James Foster Elementary School in the Saugus Union School District, who reported on the outcomes of Beat the Odds at Skyblue Mesa Elementary School, where she previously served as principal:

I used the program in a setting that had special day classes, English language learners and then general population. The most significant result was the development of an inclusive spirit among my students. Drumming, a universal language, evened the playing field. It helped to build empathy, acceptance, and gave all children a chance to lead and shine. Students in general became more tolerant and generally happy.

Unsolicited letter from Carmen Lima, a psychiatric social worker in the Los Angeles Unified School District on June 26, 2009:

Ms. Ping Ho,

My name is Carmen Lima, I am a Social Worker with LAUSD. Back in January you contacted me regarding the drumming to offer assistance, I was so nervous at the time!

I just wanted you to know that the classroom that I selected was an all boys class, several of them with serious behavior issues, a couple of the kids are on medications. However, once we started with the drumming, you would have never thought these children were nothing but well behaved young kids.

Dr. Gillenwaters, the boys' teacher, was so taken by the drumming that she asked me to prepare the class for a presentation during "Dia De La Cultura Festival" (Culture Day Festival"), we ended having two presentations on each of the two days the festival lasted.

Mr. Hooker, the school principal who stated "Whatever works" when I asked him if he would mind if I did drumming with this classroom, he had the widest, happiest smile on his face during the festival. Other teachers asked Dr. Gillenwaters, if these were the same boys she started her class with! The parents attending the festival were hollering at the end of each presentation, they were so proud of their children.

Best of all, was the camaraderie that developed amongst the class members. They

will not miss school on Wednesday so as not to miss the class. A parent came early to pick up a student on the day we had the last class, this student refused to go and the parent had to come back an hour later when the class was over.

Now my principal wants more drumming classes next year!!!!

Thank you very much for encouraging me to do the class, also for the easy to follow directions of the curriculum.

I am looking forward to next school year, to more drumming and more happy discoveries!

Respectfully,

Carmen Lima, PSW/PIC*

*Psychiatric Social Worker/Primary Intervention Counselor for Manchester Ave. Elementary School, a socioeconomically disadvantaged school in the Los Angeles Unified School District

Unsolicited statement by Karen Timko, former Coordinator of Primary Intervention and Elementary Counseling Services for the Los Angeles Unified School District, who arranged for all her counselors to be trained in Beat the Odds

“As a supervisor of a counseling program in the LAUSD, I am always looking for ways to motivate, support, and rejuvenate my staff who are deployed in the schools hardest hit by the influences of poverty, gangs, drugs, and violence. They have responded with amazing enthusiasm to drumming and recreational music making. I am thrilled that several of our schools have purchased the drums and see the health benefits for themselves as healers and as a tool for facilitating healing and hope in our students.

As far as drumming and recreational music making, I know of no other intervention that has sparked the interest, enthusiasm, and hope in the counselors I supervise. The process seems to motivate the counselors to use the method with their students while bestowing measurable health benefits in the counselor delivering the intervention. It is a win-win for all involved.

The value of the arts in healing, whether through writing, dancing, drumming, painting, or any method of self-expression is experienced immediately by the client and virtually no "side effects." The arts have a way of touching the place within where the soul, the mind, the heart, and the soul converge, awakening the body's ability to heal itself and to come to terms emotionally with the meaning of the client's unique experience.”

Unsolicited feedback on Beat the Odds from Nicole Williams, Music Teacher, Mary Beck Elementary, Elkhart, Indiana

“Good morning Ping! I had to share this testimony with you. I have my 2nd grade drummers that I've been working with for about 5 weeks. Several of them have shown gains and some are still struggling with behavior, but overall I've seen growth. Well today one of my drummers comes in and says "Mrs. Williams, I found a dollar on the floor", another said, "It might belong to Mr. Kinnick (he is in a wheelchair), he was struggling with the door, maybe it belongs to him." I felt like a proud mama.

In my school, with 89-92% receiving free or reduced lunch, this is HUGE! As "found money" is "FREE money." I asked the group "Because Romero turned in the dollar and didn't keep it he was... "RESPONSIBLE" (everyone) I placed him in the middle of the circle, and we all chanted, "Romero was responsible, he did the right thing!"* Gave him an crazy long rumble.** He didn't know what to do with himself.”

**"I am responsible, I do the right thing" is one of the affirmation lessons in the Beat the Odds program.*

***A rumble is rapid beating of the drum with the right and left hand. The equivalent of celebratory applause.*

Unsolicited feedback on Beat the Odds from Jana Gruss, Music Teacher, Newhall School District, CA

“This is a true story from drumming today:

We were drumming and we got into the subject of doing things the best we can with excellence. I asked students what kinds of things stop them in class from completing work with excellence. They were responding with the usual...other students talk, interrupt, giggle, play with things. Lucas (a troubled 4th grade boy who never takes responsibility for anything) raised his hand and asked if he could talk to the class. I thought, "This ought to be interesting." Lucas, with emotion in his voice and eyes, told the class he was sorry for stopping them from doing their best in class! The entire room was silent...stunned. I said, "Lucas, that shows such maturity." We gave Lucas a rumble and continued the lesson.

That's drumming! You drum a little and somehow the connections keep on keeping on. Thanks again Ping for your wonderful work and inspiration.”

Unsolicited feedback on Beat the Odds from Jana Gruss, Music Teacher, Newhall School District, CA

I just wanted to let you know how awesome the program is going with our Peachland 4th and 5th grade and Newhall 4th grade. We are on lesson 5 this week. I am sooooo amazing at the transparency of the students. This week we did the drumming of "I am valuable oh yeah". One boy said, "I feel valuable when my dad spends time with me. He doesn't very often because he smokes and...." at that point he looked down. I think the class felt his pain even without him finishing the sentence. We went on to talk about how we make others feel valuable. Right after class the kids had recess and one of the boys was really mean. The other kids looked at him like "Really? We just talked about this." He was very embarrassed by his own behavior. Now that's positive peer pressure.

We also, talked about trying new things and taking risks and not letting fear of failing stop us from trying new things. I teach 4-6 grade chorus. I have NEVER had so many kids try a short solo. They sang in front of about 75 kids. Wow! That is risk taking.

I could go on and on. The program really is about giving kids a 'home' within their school that feels safe and loving. At least that's what our drum circles feel like to me. I LOVE leading them. Thanks for training me and giving me this amazing experience as a teacher.

Anonymous Testimonials:

"Jami and I just finished the eighth week "Beat the Odds" lessons with five different classes. It is just wonderful. I was most uncomfortable going into the visualization lesson but . . . it was great. I thought that the kids wouldn't really buy into the whole process but...what do you know they love, love, loved it.

Last week as the kids were leaving a 9-year-old girl told me that when her older sister screamed at her she . . ."walked away, took a breath and counted to ten and then went to her comfort place." The kids really used their imaginations in making their comfort places and were so willing to share about it . . . in detail. Some of the teachers even are thinking about using the visualization process before creative writing.

The work with empathy was so well received from the students. When asked how it can help on the playground, "girl drama" was brought up. The discovery for them was that empathy causes one to reject gossip because it's soooo destructive in our community. That was 5th grade! Wow.

Also, today we were reviewing by drumming some of our affirmations. After class I had a couple of kids come up wanting a copy of the affirmations. I typed it up and sent them to the teachers. Cool!

Anyway, thank you. We begin with 5 more classes this next week. Our kids are finding tools to live life by because of your work."

"Had a cute thing happen in drum circle. I was walking across the playground at lunch and a group of 5th grade girls ran up and told me that they were chanting the affirmations that they have done at the lunch table. They said, "We just can't get them out of our head!". Good work!"

"We are back "Beating the Odds" in Newhall School District. Thanks to your generous donation of drums, and other donations and grants, we are drumming at 6 of our 10 schools. It puts a smile on my face even as I write to you as I think of how excited our 6th graders were this week who went through the program last year. Jami and I together met with about 300 kids this week!

I had to share with you what happened today in sixth grade. As I introduced the first lesson, I always add in the line that if you feel uncomfortable sharing in our large group, your teacher or I would love to hear your heart in private. After class a sixth grade girl lingered and wanted to share how a mole on her face troubled her (even to the point of thinking about having it removed) but after hearing that "We are all different and that's OK" she might just keep it because it makes her special! She also, was considering running for student council but didn't know if she had what it takes to be a leader. Well..... it just so happened that today as we were looking for leaders to lead the rumble, I looked at her and said, "You're a leader, would you lead us?" She said that it kind of made her feel like someone believed in her and that she really could run for student council.

Anyway, thanks for all the thought and love that went into this program than really does make a huge different in the lives of kids who just want to know that someone cares and believes in them."

"Our drumming is opening so many hearts and changing lives. We had a very troubled 6th grader last week go to his teacher after school and ask to start over with her. This was after the lesson on empathy. He told her he had not been thinking of how she felt. Another 9 year old on Monday started crying during drumming. I asked if she wanted to share during class and she said that she would stay after. She described a bullying situation. She felt like saying something to the other girl might make things worse. I told her I would help if she wanted me to. She left "thinking about it." She came back later that day and had told the girl that was bullying how she felt and the girl said she would stop. My little friend felt very empowered with the ability to change an outcome with her words and feelings. I was so proud of her."

Newhall School District has been using the “Beat the Odds” drumming curriculum for 5 years. We see and hear amazing things from the students each time we drum and share. Sometimes it’s just a simple thought. Other times it’s a profound idea about life that a student shares. This week was one of those weeks that I had to share with you.

We were drumming around the theme of differences and unique ways that make us interesting and special. I asked the students to share a way that they were different that was unique and interesting. Each student shared and after each we drummed the rhythm...”I am interesting!”

I then asked students if they had something about themselves that was different, and they wished that others would just accept them the way they are. Students sat very quietly. I said that it might take someone very courageous to share first. A 5th grade student raised his hand right away...I knew what he would share. He shared with the class that he stutters. This was no new revelation, for the class listens to it everyday. What was profound was the courage and context of sharing his pain.

I thanked him for his courage and asked the question again. Several hands shot up. I believe it was the courage of this classmate that inspired them to reveal their own pain. One boy said that he has lots of nose bleeds and he would like for people to not mention it. I said, “So you’d like people to treat the nose bleed like it’s invisible?” “Yes,” was his reply. Another student shared that his glasses sometimes bring on comments from other kids. One girl said that she wasn’t athletic.

I am so proud of these students for trusting each other to care for their hearts.

Thanks to Ping Ho and UCLArts and Healing for bringing this program to Newhall.”

“FYI Had a great time teaching lesson 8 "Beat the Odds" today. We were on the topic of empathy. I asked if they had an issue that others could be more empathetic about. Many students shared personal pain like . . . I wish others wouldn't point out my freckles . . . I wish people wouldn't bug me about having red hair . . . I wish that other kids wouldn't tease me about my heavy eyebrows. One 5th grade girl shared that she would be getting hearing aides soon and she would feel better about it if she knew everyone would accept her. Another girl sad that her dad just died and that it's hard for her to handle it when other kids ask if she's OK all day long.

It was interesting that they felt so comfortable with each other and trusted each other with such personal info.”

Unsolicited message by Jenny Owens, Upper Elementary Special Education Teacher, Quincy Jones Elementary School, Los Angeles Unified School District,

written to her principal:

“As you know, we have been having problems with Alex in my class. On Tuesday he attacked two students in my class, and threw objects in the classroom because I would not print something from a website he had visited. He had not been given permission to be on the computer, but remained there despite being told five times to get off it. He was still carrying a grudge about this at breakfast on Wednesday morning, when he refused to sit with the rest of the class at breakfast, muttering that he wanted his print out. He sat there scowling for 15 minutes. After breakfast we moved into the multi purpose room for drumming, and he followed us. Within 5 minutes of starting the drumming class, his whole face and manner changed. He started smiling, joined in the drumming with enthusiasm, and later volunteered to lead the drumming. I think the drumming is very therapeutic for students with emotional problems like him.”

One-year follow up interview with an elementary school counselor in the Los Angeles Unified School District (excerpted from Ho, Ping; Chinen, Kazue; Streja, Leanne; Kreitzer, Mary Jo, and Sierpina, Victor. Teaching Group Drumming to Mental Health Professionals. EXPLORE: The Journal of Science and Healing, 7(3):200-202, 2011):

“I used the one drum I had to talk about the problems and have kids give information verbally and with rhythm on the drum. A lot of them would synchronize their words with the rhythm, which enabled them to at once have a show and also a useful experience. The kids loved it. Sometimes I had kids who were referred for acting out; others [were referred] for withdrawn behavior and poor self-image. I would balance the groups to optimize them. I noticed improvements in behavior with a greater sense of cooperation between the children. Working in groups with music can be helpful with kids because the children who were shy or acting out would bring each other's qualities out in one another to level each other out. Some of these children if put together previously would have been fighting. Then they became a group and you don't beat up a member of your group. I really appreciated the training.”

Unsolicited message from Melissa Fabbi, K-12 Music Specialist From Clark County School District, Las Vegas, NV

“Thank you so much for the fantastic workshop last weekend. The training was so well organized and flowed so well. One of the best I've ever been to, academically or otherwise . . .”

“As a side note, I tried the first lesson with a focus group of 5th grade students today, and already saw positive feedback from them. When I asked one student how he felt at the end, he said. "Good". I asked him to tell me more about that and he said,

"I didn't leave the class." (He walks out or has to be escorted out of my room every week . . . if he even makes it to class at all from prior disturbances.) I even teared up a little! And that was just the first day, and me having no idea what I was doing! This program is truly inspired.

Thank you so much!"

Testimonial statement by music therapist, Summer Lall, MT-BC

"Beat the Odds proved to be an extremely valuable resource for my music therapy work with kids. It offers tons of great directives in a structured and succinct way. It's very easy to use and follow and is also adaptable, which is helpful for when I want to add my own ideas or borrow an activity or two. I highly recommend it for any expressive arts therapist looking to sharpen their skills, add some tools and become a more effective facilitator."

Graduation Speech by a 5th Grade Participant Reflecting Themes Addressed in the Program:

The following speech was delivered by a fifth grade girl during the culmination ceremony at Napa Street Elementary School on May 30, 2008. The girl's class had just completed participation in Beat the Odds, the thematic content of which is evident throughout her speech (boldfaced). Two other speeches were also delivered on that day by students who did not receive the intervention; neither of those speeches included any thematic content related to Beat the Odds.

"Welcome Napa staff, students, and parents. My dream for the future is to be an artist because I like to paint fairy tales. I hope my classmates have that desire and that wanting in life to pursue their careers they want, as they grow up. I will remember my classmates because **we are a team**, we all have had good and bad times here at Napa, **sticking together we can accomplish even more** in our upcoming challenges that middle and high school will give us. Napa is the best place for people to learn, starting as early as kindergarten. One of the things I've learned is that **you have to care about each other. I personally learned how to be responsible** and to be mature **and also to own up to my actions taking responsibility for what I did wrong, an example would be helping my classmates when they need help. We are a community together. I thank my family for teaching me something new everyday**, especially my mom and dad, they have always been there for me, supporting me with my goals and dreams, and never giving up on me. I also want to thank my prior teachers and the Napa staff for teaching me their beautiful writing styles and principles of becoming a better person. In particular I want to thank two wonderful people, Mr. B and Mrs. Gilmore for giving me that extra push when I was down and motivating me to keep on going."

