"What's In A Name?":
Names Game Activities Based on Ghanaian Weekday Names

Overview:

Names are an important part of a person's identity. In this beginning of the year icebreaker activity, students will be able to learn about the significance of days of the week and naming ceremonies in the West African Akan culture of Ghana. Learning about traditions can open doors and discussions about our own heritage and help students to get to know each other as well as learn a little bit about themselves as they reflect on their own name's meaning.

Grades:

2nd through 5th grade

Intended Content Area:

General Music

Essential Questions:

How are names a part of our personal identities?

Standard Alignment with NC Standards:

(while the standards listed below are for grade 3, you may adapt as needed for grades 4 and 5)

Performance Based Objective- Students will be able to
MU:Cr1.1.5a Improvise rhythmic, melodic, and harmonic ideas, and explain connection to specific purpose and context (such as social, cultural, and historical). MU:Cn11.0.3a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life. MU:Re7.2.4a Demonstrate and explain how responses to music are informed by the structure, the use of the elements of music, and context (such as social and cultural).

Learning Intention		**Success Criteria**
"I am learning…"	**"I am learning it**	**"I know I have learned**

To express names rhythmically in a speech peice	because...” Name activities help build classroom community	it because I can…” Perform a rhythmic name game and dance

Materials:

1. Google Slides Presentation
2. Book Your Name Is A Song
3. Spotify, youtube, or other music streaming service
4. GarageBand Loops Arrangement for "What's In A Name?" Lesson
5. Chrome Music Lab Song Maker

Duration:

2-3 days (50 minutes lesson each)

Preparation:

Key Concepts and Vocabulary for this unit
Key Concepts: Connection - "How is it connected to other things?" Perspective - "What are the points of view?" Responsibility - "What can be done to help?" **Enduring Understandings** ☐ Names are a part of a person's identity and self worth. It is important to respect names and call people by the correct name ☐ Cultures and traditions help influence the names that are chosen for a child

Procedure:

Day 1
- Teacher plays the song "The Name Game" by Shirley Ellis as the students enter the classroom. ▶ THE NAME GAME SHIRLEY ELLIS
- Teacher gives an introduction to class. Tell the students that they will be learning about the importance of a name.
- Teacher will read aloud the story, Your Name Is A Song by Jamilah Thompkins-Bigelow
- Teacher will lead a discussion on why we should be able to properly say a person's name.

- ○ "Saying someone's name properly shows that we respect that person"
- Students are seated in a circle as teacher leads the name game activity in AB form (section A is the chant and section B is the reciting of the names)
  - ○ Practice the name chant below (teacher will rhythmically say the chant over a steady beat and allow students to echo until they can successfully say it together in unison)
    - ■ Chant lyrics:

Please say	your	name	and
(Ti ta	Ti	Ta	Ta)
Be cre-	a-tive	too	
(Ti-ti	Ti-ti	Ta	Shh)
When you	say your	name,	we will
(Ti-ti	Ti-ti	Ta	Ti-ti)
Say it	after	you!	
(Ti-ti	Ti-ti	Ta	Shh)

  - ○ After practicing the A section (chant) the teacher may begin to demonstrate different ways that students may say their own names (high pitched voices, low pitched voices, silly or expressive voices).
  - ○ Allow a few seconds for students to explore how they want to present themselves. (this may include poses or simple dance movements as long as it is safe and accessible for others to copy).
    - ■ Examples may include: two finger peace sign, dab, hands on hips, stand on one leg, etc.
  - ○ After rehearsing the chant while patting the steady beat on their laps, introduce students to a simple pat clap ostinato pattern to accompany the chant while saying the chant together in unison again
    - ■ Pat clap pat pat clap
      (Ta Ta Ti-ti Ta)
  - ○ This body percussion can be transferred to drums during the A section (chant) of the name game turning the "pat" into a beat on the drum while maintaining the claps.
  - ○ When the group is ready, begin the B section of the name game by going around the circle and letting each individual student rhythmically recite their own names for the class to echo back
    - ■ Example:

      1st student: "My name is Leslie"
      (Ta Ti-ti Ta Ta)

      Class echos: "Your name is Leslie"
      (Ta Ti-ti Ta Ta)
  - ○ Remember to add an expressive voice or pose as the lyrics suggest: "be creative too"

- The class will say the names of four classmates at a time (echoing after each person and copying their expressive choices of pose and vocal inflection). - the teacher will maintain a steady beat on a cowbell or block during the B section as students may have discontinued the ostinati pattern on the drums in order to copy the leader who is reciting their name at that time.
- After four students have said their names and had them echoed back, the whole group will say the chant of the A section again in unison. The process continues in ABABA form until every child has had their turn.

Day 2
- Discuss the meaning and importance of a name
- Ask students if they know what their names mean or why they were chosen for them
- Introduce the topic of days of the week names (tradition of the Akan people in Ghana)
- Post an image of the names for each day of the week.
  - See if children can find their name
  - Children may not know what day of the week they were born, but a quick Google search of their birthday and year may help
  - Students may also just choose a name that they like if they do not know which day they were born.
- Discuss naming ceremonies and practices
  - In the Ghanaian Ashanti tradition, it is customary to name a child a week after they are born during a special naming ceremony. These naming ceremonies are done with close friends and family present to officially introduce the child to the community.
  - Typically, the first name a child is given is often known as the "soul name," for the day of the week the child was born. It is sometimes believed that one's personality type is potentially (but not guaranteed) to be influenced by that day of the week.
  - The second name is a more personal name. It could be a name that depicts birthing order, or the conditions in which the child arrived.
  - The third name is the child's family name.
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Day 3
- Twi "Days Of The WeeK" Song
**Note: there are other variations and spellings for these names and this is just one version
  - Listen to the youtube video by Yaw & Friends found in the Google Slides Presentation
  - Practice reading the solfege to warm up for singing the Twi Days of The Week Song

- Have the students listen to the song again and focus on singing the "Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! La la la la la la la, la la la" lyrics as they improvise a dance.
- Allow students to share what day of the week they were born
- Students that don't know what day they were born may choose a name for themselves
- Students will freestyle dance at the front of the room when their names/day of the week is mentioned in the song
- Practice the pronunciation of the Twi words without the music and then try singing and dancing with the song 2nd or 3rd time.
- Teacher will encourage the students to try singing the song in English and Twi without the assistance of the videos
- Students can stand or sit in a circle while singing and performing the steady beat body percussion ostinato
  - Pat   clap   pat   clap
    (Ta   Ta   Ta   Ta)
- Consider adding the accompaniment track titled [GarageBand Loops Arrangement for "What's In A Name?" Lesson](#) as background music (the recording is short and may be played again to accommodate each group having a turn to dance when their Akan name is called).

**The phonetic English pronunciation guide for the Twi words "Obiara yɛawon" sounds like "O-byah-rah won" and the phonetic English pronunciation for "bɛsa" sounds like "beh-sah".

- Lyrics (translation):

  If you're born on Monday, come in and dance
  Obiara yɛawon Ɛdwoada (all those born on Monday)
  Kojo (male born on Monday)
  Adwoa (female born on Monday)
  Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
  La la la la la la la la, la la la!

  If you're born on Tuesday, come in and dance
  Obiara yɛawon Ɛbenada (all those born on Tuesday)
  Kwabena (male born on Tuesday)
  Abena (female born on Tuesday)
  Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
  La la la la la la la la, la la la!

  If you're born on Wednesday, come in and dance
  Obiara yɛawon Wukuada (all those born on Wednesday)
  Kwaku (male born on Wednesday)
  Akua (female born on Wednesday)
  Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
  La la la la la la la la, la la la!

If you're born on Thursday, come in and dance
Obiara yɛawon Yawoada (all those born on Thursday)
Yaw (male born on Thursday)
Yaa (female born on Thursday)
Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
La la la la la la la la, la la la!

If you're born on Friday, come in and dance
Obiara yɛawon Ɛfiada (all those born on Friday)
Kofi (male born on Friday)
Afia (female born on Friday)
Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
La la la la la la la la, la la la!

If you're born on Saturday, come in and dance
Obiara yɛawon Memeneda (all those born on Saturday)
Kwame (male born on Saturday)
Ama (female born on Saturday)
Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
La la la la la la la la, la la la!

If you're born on Sunday, come in and dance
Obiara yɛawon Kwasiada (all those born on Sunday)
Kwasi (male born on Sunday)
Akosua (female born on Sunday)
Bɛsa, bɛsa, bɛsa! (dance, dance, dance!)
La la la la la la la la, la la la!

Extensions:

- Play the name game again but this time perform the rhythm words during the A section on xylophones set in C pentatonic and use Akan names for the B section of the name game
- Students can use Chrome Music Lab's [Song Maker](#) to compose a song by spelling their names into the program. They can use their actual names and their "Ghanaian soul names" based on the day of the week they were born.
    - Students start by using their actual name and then compare it to the way your "Ghanaian soul names" sounds.
    - How can you make your name sound more musical in the program? Can you still spell your name while creating a pattern in the colors/notes used?

- Share the old English nursery rhyme "Monday's Child" as a comparison of cultures around the world with similar ideas about days of the week having significance to a person's character traits.
    - Monday's child is fair of face,
      Tuesday's child is full of grace,
      Wednesday's child is full of woe,
      Thursday's child has far to go,
      Friday's child is loving and giving,
      Saturday's child works hard for a living,
      Sunday's child knows the way
      Now every child, come on, let's play!

**This is an adaptation of the poem Monday's Child (first printed in A. E. Bray's *Traditions of Devonshire* in 1838) - I altered the last two lines at the end of the poem so as not to assume that all families celebrate the sabbath on Sunday.
** Some children may be curious to hear that "Wednesday's child is full woe," you can mention to them that Wednesday Addams from the Addams Family is named Wednesday because of the line in the original poem

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