

Planning a Bluegrass Festival

Summary

In this activity, students will work in small groups to plan a fictional bluegrass festival from beginning to end, using online resources and local print media.

Objectives

At the end of this lesson, students will be able to:

- explain how bluegrass music gained popularity across the country and around the world
- describe the roles of artists, patrons and music organizations in producing bluegrass music festivals
- use a variety of technological resources to gather, synthesize and communicate knowledge
- work cooperatively in small groups to plan an event

Time

2-4 periods

Background

One of the most important settings for playing bluegrass is a bluegrass festival. A festival is a gathering (usually in a park or country setting) where people listen to many bands over the course of a few days, and also camp out and play music themselves. Bluegrass festivals actually are part of a much older tradition of traveling tent shows and camp meetings (often religiously themed) that were held in the rural South throughout the early 1900s. However, festivals as we know them are more recent. Since they depend on people being able to drive long distances and take long vacations, they became very popular in the mid 1960s, when the nation's interstate highway system (begun in 1956) was nearly complete. Camping out was just getting popular and gas was cheap! Nowadays, literally hundreds of bluegrass festivals take place each year in the United States, and in many foreign countries, too. The festivals range from small celebrations of favorite local bands to huge gatherings with thousands of fans (and players!).

Teacher's Notes

This lesson is divided into parts that can stand alone, allowing you to decide how much time you can dedicate to this learning experience. The culminating project for Part I is the creation of a festival poster, which can be completed by students independently or in a group. Part II involves a cooperative group activity that challenges students to plan a fictional bluegrass festival and develop a brochure to advertise it. You can integrate math into this activity by giving students a festival planning budget and having them create an itemized list of event expenses. If you decide to include the budgeting activity, it may help to provide students with a budgeting worksheet or spreadsheet to help them record their expenditures.

Vocabulary

Camp meeting, jam session, picker, repertoire

Materials

Access to the Internet, copies of the *Festival Planner Worksheet* (**provided**), posterboard or large sheets of construction paper, pens, crayons, markers, newspapers and magazines;

Optional: spreadsheet printouts (for budgeting activity), access to web page editing software like Dreamweaver or FrontPage (for creating festival web pages)

Procedure

Part I

1. Have students read the essays and journals available on the sitesALIVE! website this week.
2. Ask students to share with the class any concert experiences they have had, and write student responses on the board.
3. Discuss the similarities and differences of students' previous concert experiences with the bluegrass festivals described in the online materials.
4. As a class, explore the online Bluegrass Festival Finder Index (<http://www.festivalfinder.com/bluegrass/Bluegrass.indexed.cfm>), which has links to websites for several festivals, past and present. View some of the festival websites together, taking note of the content provided.
5. Provide students with copies of the *Festival Planner Worksheet*, then tell them to complete Part I of the worksheet, in the process designing their own festival poster for an imaginary festival.

Part II

1. As a class, brainstorm about what event planners need to consider when planning a festival.
2. Divide students into small groups to work on Part II of the *Festival Planner Worksheet*. They will need access to the Internet (see Resources section for useful websites) and/or local print media (magazines, newspapers, etc.) in order to complete the task.
3. Following the worksheet instructions, have students demonstrate their new knowledge of festivals by working together to develop a festival advertising brochure.
4. **Optional:** Give students a budget of anywhere from \$200,000-\$500,000 to plan their festivals. Have them keep track of all costs as they "select" musicians, venues and concessions for the event. Challenge students to stay under their budget while ensuring a satisfied festival audience.

Extend the Experience

If you have access to the necessary technology, have students work in small groups to develop web pages to advertise their festivals. Web page editing software like Dreamweaver, Front Page and Claris Home Page are actually quite easy to use. In addition, you can gather appropriate images ahead of time and develop a template for students to fill with content. If possible, you may want to involve your school's technology coordinator or parent volunteers who have experience with basic web page development.

Festival Planner Worksheet

Part I

Where will you have your festival? (City? State? Reasons for selecting location?)

What are the facilities of the venue? (Park? City plaza? Campground?)

How long will your festival be? What are the dates? (Explain your reasoning.)

What will festival tickets cost? (Children's prices? Multi-day vs. single-day prices?)

Which bands will appear at the festival? (How did you select these bands?)

Who do you want to come? (Describe your target market.)

Using the information above, design your own bluegrass festival poster on a piece of posterboard or a large sheet of construction paper. Remember to give your festival a catchy name!

Part II

Directions: Now is the time to gather more information about planning your own festival! Be sure to elaborate on the questions above and also address some of the issues below. Use the resources suggested by your teacher to gather more information about planning a bluegrass festival, then work with your group to write out responses to address the issues involved. Once you are done with your research, develop a brochure to advertise your festival, including some of the details below to attract festival visitors.

1. Directions to the location, and/or maps
2. Parking information
3. Camping and/or hotel accommodations
4. Volunteer recruitment
5. Bathrooms
6. Food vendors
7. Souvenirs
8. Cost of bands
9. Concert lineup and/or schedule or events
10. Other entertainment