The Art and Science of Songleading

*[Specialty Track 1]*

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| **Author(s):** | Noam Katz |
| **summary:** | In this intensive, we will learn the Art (and Science) of Songleading through three focused areas: Song Leading skills, Repertoire and Creating Community through Music. – *Submitted by Noam Katz*  (*No instrument or musical ability necessary!)* |
| **Topic(s):** | Music & Rhythm; Community Building |
| **Learning Objective:** | Participants will gain knowledge in how to effectively teach new music, build a song session, use an array of verbal and non-verbal cues, and gain new camp repertoire |
| **Audience:** | 35-40 participants |
| **TIMING:** | 90 |
| **AppendiCes:** | Cornerstone 2017 Songleading Track (Appendix #1); CS Chord Companion (Appendix #2); How NOT to Teach a Song (Appendix #3) |
| **Materials Needed:** | Shoebox with lid and mirror inside, Butcher paper, markers, guitar, music stand, drums/percussion |
| **Set-UP DETAILS:** | Indoor space large enough for circle of chairs, and small group work (including space for instruments) |

**Session Timeline & Outline:**

1. Intentional Drum Circle (15 mins.)
2. Introductions – impactful musical moments at camp (5 mins.)
3. Why songlead? Ben Folds interview (10 mins.)
4. What’s in Your Guitar Case? (10 mins.)
5. Song Teaching: Do’s & Don’ts (25 mins.)
6. Repertoire (15 mins.)
7. Mirror in a Box/Drumming (10 mins.)

**1. Intentional Drum Circle (15 mins.)**

Participants walk in with drums/percussion already in place on chairs. Play/drum together to build sense of community through music and rhythm. Facilitator gives cues when to start, stop, play louder/softer. If time permits, play “Call-and-Response” or “Funky in the Middle” games to engage.

* Why do you think we began a Songleading track with a drum circle? What might these activities have in common? *(music/rhythm, build community with shared sense of purpose, FUN! relaxing, establishes the roles of facilitator and group, etc.)*

**2. Introductions (5 mins.)**

Go around the circle. Everyone introduces their names, camps, Songleading experience (if any) and ONE impactful musical moment in their lives. *Doesn’t have to be Jewish or at camp.*

**3. Why Songlead? Ben Folds interview (10 mins.)**

* What role does music play at camp?
* What are the benefits of having a skilled songleader (as opposed to spontaneous group singing)? *Important for ruach at camp, education, holy moments/worship, transmitters of Hebrew text, facilitator to bring out the best in the group, etc.*
* Why do YOU want to do it?

Listen to Ben Folds’ NPR interview from 2001.

* What attitudes/techniques does he use to transform his solo “living room” concerts into opportunities for group singing?
* What are the differences between performance and songleading? Similarities?

**4. What’s in Your Guitar Case? (10 mins.)**

Facilitator asks, “What are the basic skills and values needed to be an effective songleader?”

Have someone draw a large guitar case on piece of butcher paper. Then everyone takes markers writes words or draws symbols to answer the question.

Facilitator adds: *Da lifnei mi atah omeid lifnei atah omeid.* Know before whom you stand…*before* you stand!

If time permits, do index card activity in chevruta (as outlined on second-to-last page of Appendix #1)

**5. Song Teaching: Do’s & Don’ts (25 mins.)**

Distribute slips from Appendix #3: “How NOT to Teach a Song”.

Play until most participants have had a turn.

Teach a song (from Appendix #2).

* What worked well for you in learning that song?
* What could have been improved?

Review elements of good song teaching on pages 1-3 of Appendix #1. Include mention of:

* Preparing words and chords *ahead* of time
* Knowing the meaning or context (especially if it’s in Hebrew!)
* Introduce with enthusiasm (the “sell”)
* Start with the hook/chorus
* Teach melody without the words (or, occasionally, rhythm of words without melody)
* RAM: “Repeat after me” / Chunking
* Review, review, review (lines, sections, tricky parts)
* Troubleshooting
* 24-hour rule: “the Stickiness Factor”

If time, ask for any volunteers to teach a short song (or small part of one).

**6. Repertoire (15 mins.)**

Teach new camp repertoire from Appendix #2 and/or slides.

**7. Mirror in a Box / Drumming (10 mins.)**

Pass around a shoebox with a mirror hidden inside (participants do not know it is there). Ask each participant to look inside and say 2 things that are very visible in the box and 1 thing that is inside, but much more difficult to see. (e.g., “I can easily see confidence and a sense of humor, but it is more difficult to see humility.”) Because this is a very introspective exercise, it is encouraged that the facilitator(s) go first to set a tone. Some will be too uncomfortable to take it seriously (e.g., “I see two ears and a nose”), but don’t scold or get frustrated. Use it as a learning opportunity in your follow-up questions:

* Were you surprised by what was inside the shoebox?
* What was most difficult about this activity for you? Why?
* What do you think was the point of this exercise? What does it have to do with songleading?

If time remains, end with drumming to bookend the workshop.