

Teaching Philosophy

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Art of Teaching Music II

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While studying music education on the undergraduate level and preparing to become a future music educator, a philosophy of teaching provides the foundation for shaping a teacher's instructional behaviors and what they will provide for their students in the classroom. Being aware of one's philosophy helps to inform an educator's decisions in lessons and keeps teachers accountable for their beliefs. Educators are students themselves, and therefore their philosophies may change throughout the course of their teaching, but creating an initial philosophy begins the teaching journey.

Through the study of music, students develop many skills, such as creativity, collaboration, communication, empathy, critical thinking and problem-solving, patience, persistence, and much more, which can be used in all different kinds of situations. Music, as well as other arts, opens up the opportunity for people to "explore realities, relationships, and ideas that cannot be conveyed simply in words or numbers" (Judson, 2019). Music can be used as access into the human spirit and emotions, as well as an outlet for self-expression, experimentation, and creativity. Paul Lehman wrote, "Music provides means for self-realization and self-fulfilling productivity. By participating in music we contribute to our individual growth. By participating in music we help to ensure that our lives are satisfying, purposeful, and worthwhile. By participating in music we make our own personal contribution to the quality of life." People are able to connect with themselves and with others through the universal language of music and are able to learn about different viewpoints, cultures, time periods, and more from sharing music. Nancy Rubino wrote, "It is clear from the research the arts provide the emotional, creative, and expressive development that students can benefit from throughout their lives"

(2015). Incorporating music into students' lives creates well-rounded individuals who are prepared for whatever they experience in life. Music helps to develop the whole person. It cultivates the idea of *feeling*. Bennett Reimer stated, "The arts are the means by which humans can actively explore and experience the unbounded richness of human subjective possibilities" (1989). While this is true, music has many components and must be studied beyond a purely aesthetic or praxial standpoint. A music educator should want to do justice to the full scope of the musical experience. Music is also beneficial simply as an experiential and pleasurable activity. It has both intrinsic and extrinsic benefits that are undeniable, including enhanced language capabilities, mental processing and problem-solving skills, self-esteem, and empathy (Silverstone, 2018). Music can be important to different individuals in many different ways, and all of these ways can be accepted and appreciated in music education.

Because of the innumerable benefits of studying music, it is very important that people continue to study music throughout their lives. Music education should be a major subject in primary and secondary education, in which students practice music on a daily, or if need be weekly, basis in order to hone their musical and life skills and gain a true appreciation for the art. Once students are out of traditional schooling, people should continue to surround themselves with music and hopefully study it in groups or ensembles. Community or church music ensembles currently act as an important outlet for those who wish to keep music in their lives. Hopefully, if students can understand and appreciate the importance of music in primary and secondary schooling, they will want to continue to study later in life. Music is an art and skill that is accessible to all and can be taught at all levels. David Elliott argues that "all forms of music making involve a multidimensional form of thinking that is also a unique source of one of

the most important kinds of knowledge human beings can gain” and should be “a viable educational end for all students” and all people (1995).

In order to gain an overall appreciation for music, people should be exposed to as many different genres and styles of music as possible. In doing this, students can develop their musical interests, empathize with other cultures, and learn different musical elements. “Music is a diverse human practice,” Elliott says, and there are many musical practices that should be experienced (1995). Music educators can benefit from incorporating styles of music that students are listening to outside of the classroom. Studying genres such as pop, rap, electronic, along with classical music, will create well-rounded musicians and connect students’ worlds to the classroom. If students are “posed with problems relating to themselves in the world and with the world,” they will feel “challenged and obliged to respond to that challenge” (Freire, 1970). Educators should also provide musical examples from other cultures for their students to develop an acceptance of others and distinguish between different sounds, instrumentation, language, and ideas within different cultures.

When teaching music, educators need to be aware of different learning styles and attempt to accommodate everyone. Each student best cognitively processes the information presented to them in different ways, whether this be visually, aurally, verbally, kinesthetically, or a mixture of styles, and students are shown a disservice if educators do not teach lessons in favor of each learning style (Calissendorf, 2015). Music can be learned, performed, and appreciated in many different ways, which are all correct. Music educators can provide different strategies and methods for their students to set each one up for success in their own way. This can be

accomplished by having students listen to music, play instruments, sing, compose, write essays, improvise, dance, give presentations, teach their own lessons, or other methods.

Because each student is different in the way that they learn, as well as their interests and needs in the classroom, a student-centered music classroom is very important and most beneficial to students. Students are encouraged to self-reflect and problem solve about music-making and creating in student-centered learning (Hansen, 2016). In these lessons, students are the ones actively performing, creating, responding, and connecting with elements of music. Student-centered lessons help keep students directly engaged and interested in what they are learning.

Critical Pedagogy for Music Education, developed by Frank Abrahams encourages learning to be a partnership between students and teachers where students can connect what they are learning to the world around them. CPME empowers students to know they are knowledgeable and be able to act upon that knowledge (Abrahams, 2005). By connecting music to relevant circumstances and elements in their own life, students will be able to personalize what they are learning and understand it better and for longer. Students will not just disregard the information right away because they feel it does not apply to them. Music applies to all and can be enjoyable and beneficial to people at every level. Laszlo Vikar stated that “music satisfies a need, and by no matter what means consciously or instinctively, it is an organic part of everyday life” (Zemke, 1977). It is up to music educators to provide this for students.

Music can be successfully taught in many different methods, including the use of instruments. The use of instruments in the classroom can be very beneficial to students as another hands-on approach to music in which they are able to see musical relationships on the

instrument. One way to connect students' world to the music classroom is by incorporating modern band elements, such as guitar, drums, keyboard, etc., in order to play popular music styles. Students can easily learn to play basic patterns on these instruments and have an instant feeling of success. Through doing this, they will be learning important musical and life skills while having fun and performing music they are already familiar with.

Music education provides so much for the individual and the community that it cannot be overlooked. It develops social, emotional, and mental skills and acts as a release for emotions and ideas. Music should be studied at every level throughout one's life and can provide benefits to everyone, no matter how "talented" one may be. The music classroom should incorporate all different genres and styles of music and be student-centered with different teaching methods and strategies in order to make every student feel accommodated and accepted. Through these elements, students can benefit and attain the full musical experience which will help them to succeed in life.

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