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TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

The Nature of Music

Music is a form of creative expression unique to human beings and distinctive among the arts for its manipulation of the medium of sound. Though not always accurately conceptualized as a language, music is communicative in an abstract manner that tends to be more expressive than explicit. In the sense that every human culture on the planet creates music—music as unique and diverse as the cultures themselves—music is universal. Every human being has an innate ability to perceive, create, and respond to music as well as the capacity to develop those abilities.

General Guiding Principles for Teaching

- Authentic teachers realize they are facilitators of student learning and discovery and that instructional practices should actively engage students in the learning process
- Thorough teachers not only deliver content, but they also help students learn to evaluate information critically, use information ethically and effectively, and teach students how to acquire information independently
- Collaborative teachers realize they are part of a larger community of educators and find ways to contribute to, partner with, and utilize resources from this community for the betterment of the teaching profession and the improvement of their own instructional practices
- Inclusive teachers ensure their classrooms are safe, positive learning environments where all students feel supported and valued
- Culturally competent teachers are mindful of students' backgrounds, lived experiences, and cultural heritage
- Socially responsive teachers acknowledge and seek to mitigate disparities in access, resources, and opportunities to promote equitable student outcomes
- Effective teachers establish meaningful learning objectives, plan diverse and differentiated instructional activities, make content connections, develop comprehensive assessment plans, and evaluate assessment data to inform future practices
- Resilient teachers view classroom setbacks as challenges to be overcome and plan strategically and creatively to maintain progress and foster student success
- Adaptive teachers readily alter instruction in response to classroom conditions and are first to find effective applications for new instructional technologies and resources
- Masterful teachers use a variety of questioning techniques to promote students' higher order cognition, assess student learning, and facilitate student self-reflection

Guiding Principles for Teaching Music and Directing Music Ensembles

- Music instruction should lean toward *doing* music rather than simply learning about musical concepts—content is obviously vital, but it can and should be embedded in experiential learning activities where possible and practical
- The music classroom should be a place where student voice is reflected in everything from classroom procedures to the selection of repertoire and refinement of performance
- Music teachers have a responsibility to connect students to the next step in their music education, whether bridging the gap from middle school to high school, preparing students for involvement at the collegiate level, or facilitating life-long musical engagement
- Music students should experience high-quality instructional materials and collaborative teaching approaches designed to provide optimal challenge, to support each student’s sense of competence, and to provide the opportunity for each student to experience meaningful success
- Quality music programs facilitate an array of opportunities for students to engage with music and music making outside of the curricular music classroom
- Music majors should be provided an appropriate balance of theoretical and practical knowledge specific to their degree program and career aspirations
- In ensemble settings, all students benefit from instructional strategies that break down and explain the rationale for rehearsal priorities and strategies and engage ensemble members actively in error detection; self, peer, and ensemble critique; and in the selection of approaches to correcting problems

Summary

An education in music is fundamental for every human being, and our profession should do more to advance music education and musical engagement at every stage of life. In addition to creating classroom environments that promote student ownership and that support the development of intrinsic motivation in music, music teachers must also elucidate and provide connection to the ways in which music can continue to be part of students’ lives following graduation or grade-level advancement. To further facilitate continuing musical engagement for students, music teaching practices must help students become adaptive musicians who are equally at home in a large ensemble or small chamber group, or as a solo performer. In this way, students may be better equipped to engage with any form of musical activity they may find in their communities. Finally, proactive music advocacy—at the school, community, state, and national levels—is inherent to being an effective music educator. Music teachers should judiciously consider what claims of non-musical benefit are employed and make every effort to ensure that these claims have merit and are always balanced with a clear, articulate, music-centric advocacy component.