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E535

Philosophical Curricular Orientation

Curriculum Setting

My background originates in flute performance, which led me to a concern for providing a stronger musical foundation for beginning flutists. Because of this I soon jumped headlong into K-5 elementary general music. The elementary school general music program is therefore the setting in which I will base my curriculum.

For my curriculum I will assume that the elementary school includes grades Kindergarten through fifth and that as the music specialist I will realistically be able to meet individually with each class twice a week for 30-45 minutes. My ideal setting will also include an extracurricular choir for fourth and fifth graders and a training choir of second and third graders. Neither of these choirs would be exclusive or based on ability. They would meet at twice a week either before or after school. I would also coordinate with other schools in the district to create an after-school music academy offering private lessons, group lessons and/or ensemble experience, and extra theory/musicality classes. Older students (grades fourth and fifth) will have specific instruction time on recorder, keyboard, and the drum circle. Throughout all the grades I will emphasize singing, listening, and movement.

Within the classroom we will have room for movement, both individual and coordinated as a group (such as a large circle). It will also provide access to instruments, including Orff instruments, keyboards, and hand drums. The classroom will include instructional tools such as a Smartboard, a piano, and a computer station. We will also be situated with easy access to outdoors for folksongs that include games that are too large for the classroom. Ideally we have maximum flexibility with minimal loss of class time.

Curricular Orientation

I find my curricular style to be primarily holistic in nature. I prefer teaching to include a very organic flow where discussion of one topic leads to a natural transition into the next subject. For example, I tell the class a story that includes a folksong in it. I then teach the folksong and we segue into learning the game that accompanies the song. The game includes jumping to the beat so I call attention to that and ask them tell me what they are feeling and then we talk about how to properly notate it.

The curiosity aspect of the holistic approach is also important in the way I teach. Curiosity can be a great motivator. If we are working on one aspect of a musical example, such as the time signature or an ostinato, students may become interested in the instrumentation of the piece and start asking questions about different instruments. That can provide a great opportunity for learning because the students are coming up with questions of their own volition.

I feel that it is very important, especially in music, to encourage student input. Music is often considered the education of emotion and consequently part of the educational experience should include opportunities for students to learn to distinguish between different feelings invoked by different musical aspects. Students should be able to express what they are feeling in musical terms and also explain why they believe they have that reaction or association. This takes practice within the classroom. Then, whether they like an example or not and regardless of how it makes them feel, they can properly identify why and provide feedback.

In my opinion, the most important aspect of the holistic approach (and the reason I believe I fall primarily under its categorical umbrella) is the idea that learning is based around experiences. I think this is especially true both for music and for children. Music is meant to be experienced and children want most to be involved and actively engaged in something. I believe

children learn music best through experiences like showing and feeling the beat or the contour of the line through their bodies. They cannot learn to sing in tune without actually singing. Nor can they learn to play an instrument without actually playing it. The same goes for composing, improvising, moving in a musical way, etc.

This does not mean that I do not feel the need to incorporate any of the other styles of teaching into my curriculum. I think the Laissez-faire style emphasizes enjoyment and music is a subject which is meant to be enjoyed and is meant to help students discover their own musical preferences. Music is also a subject that provides extensive opportunity for self-motivation. That is why I would include extracurricular choir and an after-school academy in my program.

I think the ideas behind Linear-thinking are especially important in a classroom setting. Structure is a necessity and material needs to be level and age appropriate. Students may become curious about an aspect of music but not be ready to learn about it. If certain topics are not covered within a grade level, the students may not be ready for the material that they want to learn. There has to be a structured schedule of some kind within the curriculum in order to ensure that students are prepared for the next area. The classroom itself must also be structured in order to avoid issues of behavioral and classroom management.

The Critical Theory style is essential for helping students learn to think in a social setting. Looking at female composers or the music of other cultures helps students to see music in a broader light. Discussing how music is viewed by the world at large can help students understand why certain things happen. For instance, what are the pros and cons of “proper” concert etiquette? Discovering examples of historically popular music in comparison to current popular music can give students a greater appreciation for historical music and also help them to listen more critically to popular music.

Ideals of Music Education

Music is for everyone. Everyone is capable of learning to act and think musically given the opportunity. We come into this world and naturally move and act in musical ways as children. In addition to being naturally prone toward music, our society is filled with music. Everywhere children go they are inundated with music – in the car, watching movies or television, at the grocery store, and sports events. They will continue to be exposed to music throughout their entire life. Without a music education, they will not fully understand why music impacts them the way it does and why it is so powerful.

Music exists in every cultural and learning to understand music can help bridge cultural gaps and create better understanding. This can foster an awareness of others and a sense of community. It can also bring about an improved sense of our own culture. In the same manner in which good literature expands the viewpoints of students, good music helps students to understand our past and present societies. Cultures are judged by the quality and variety of art they produce and the art these children will produce will be largely how we are judged by future generations.

There is a unique mode of cognition that accompanies music. Scientific studies talk about the learning and practicing of art causing the brain to rewire itself and strengthen the synapses. Music is considered a universal learning language and can benefit every student. Bennett Reimer, in his book *A Philosophy of Music Education: Advancing the Vision*, says that, “musical thinking, doing, and feeling, in their necessary interdependence and their exercise of genuine, high-order intelligence, may well be a paradigm of human mindful functioning at its optimal level.” If all of these things are true, then it is unfair to deprive students of musical learning experiences.

It is of utmost importance to ensure that these musical experiences are meaningful. They should be full of good, genuine music and not music that has been specifically composed for the classroom in order to imitate authentic music. Whenever possible it should be music that is highly engaging and that draws the listener into it. This means using music that is age appropriate and building upon past experience. Kindergarteners should not start off listening to an entire Mahler symphony or an extended gamelan performance. Students should have experiences that help them learn to make connections between the music and the musical concepts that they already know and the music and concepts that they are learning.

Students' experiences should also be creative in nature. Students should learn to create music in a variety of ways including performing, improvising, composing, and arranging. The performance experiences should also be varied. They should include both vocal and instrumental experiences and within those experiences they should have both individual and ensemble experiences. Creativity can be encouraged through expression and ingenuity.

The variety of learning experiences should also include variety of exposure. A music education ideally encompasses all genres throughout all history. It includes international genres. In addition to traditional western music, students should experience international musical practices and thinking, including learning about instruments unique to other cultures and scales that are not used in western practice.

Finally, experiences must involve listening and contemplative exercises. Without learning to listen attentively to music, students will never understand how to analyze and describe music for themselves. They need to learn how to evaluate music and make connections, both within music and in relation to other subjects such as dance, art, literature, math, and

science. Without listening to examples students can never fully understand how music fits into history and culture.

It is the role of the teacher to provide these experiences for the students. The teacher must make decisions about the specific experiences that are going to be offered to the students and the order in which they will occur. The teacher's duty is to present the experiences in a logical sequence. He/she ultimately chooses the topics and the material used and therefore needs to know the material well enough to instruct the students and function as a source for them.

While instructing, the teacher also acts as a guide for the students. It is the teacher's role to direct the students along the desired path and make sure they are building upon former knowledge and experiences. Usually it is the questions asked by the teacher that lead students to the discovery of new relationships and connections. When necessary, the teacher is also there to demonstrate these new relationships or new skills.

When students stumble or misunderstand a concept, the teacher is overseeing their learning process and can help correct a misunderstanding or false belief. He/she provides feedback for the students as they work on new skills, including encouragement. The teacher also clarifies goals for students and helps them to understand what they must do to obtain those goals.

Last, teachers exercise a lot of control of the students' environment. It is up to the teacher to be enthusiastic about music and to create a feeling of enthusiasm in the classroom. The physical environment is essential. The teacher is in charge of ensuring that transitions between spaces are smooth and that classroom management procedures are in place. The teacher also creates a musical environment. How music is used and how often music is used are decisions made by the teacher. From rhythm cues to singing directions, there are a number of decisions a teacher can make to enhance the musical environment for the students.