

Music 386
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Philosophy of Music Education

Music is a part of everyday life. It expresses who we are as peoples of distinct cultures, beliefs and ideas. On a smaller scale, it helps one express the identity, ideas, longings and dreams that are unique to the individual. Music, across all boundaries, has the power to unite those of different religious objectives, opinions, and values. Music is not only important, but it's a magnificent force in the world.

Music and other arts are a necessary part of a well rounded education yet not all students are privileged enough to receive it. A student not involved in a choral or instrumental performance group misses out on a valuable and important part of his or her general education. As mentioned above, we live in a musical world. With that in mind, should we limit the education of basic musical principles and ideas only to those that are apt to learn them? Music education should be available and even required for every individual that passes through the public school system.

This brings a whole new dilemma of what exactly should be taught. Elementary theory is taught in grade school in accordance to the National Standards for Arts Education. I believe an eclectic approach should be taken to incorporate the best from each of the methodologies of Kodaly, Orff, Dalcroze, and Gordon. The Orff approach gives students a chance to apply the knowledge learned in theory to an actual performance. Also, in light of the technological age in which we live, students now have

the opportunity to learn from computer games generated with musical themes and computer tests that accompany method books.

At the high school level, however, the student is capable of completing courses in music appreciation that incorporate a basic knowledge of music theory, history, and the different genres of music—first within our own society, then music worldwide. Courses in music appreciation and theory will help students understand the fundamentals of music and how current styles and trends in music have developed throughout history. It will make the students educated listeners, and active participants in the musical world around them. This type of information is not generally taught in a practice/performance oriented setting, so it applies to student performers as well as non-performers.

Multicultural curriculum provides a great opportunity for a cross curricular experience for students. Multiculturalism should be taught in as many disciplines as can be applied. Social studies may cover the bulk of information, but art, home economics, and music can offer valuable insights into the study of each culture. Using a holistic approach, students can learn beyond the lecture and can begin to experience for themselves, the sights, tastes, and sounds of the cultured studied.

All students should be included in this basic understanding and appreciation for music in its varied forms. Courses like the ones mentioned above, should be open to all students regardless of natural capability. Every student should have the opportunity to experience and learn about music firsthand. Students with behavioral disorders may find an inclination toward music, or a means of expressive him or herself in an appropriate venue. Other students with disabilities may develop necessary social skills in the environment of the music classroom.

I feel very strongly about offering a wide variety of test types for students. Not all students will excel at the same type of assessment; therefore, it is only fair to give a different style of test every now and then. This is especially important when assessing exceptional learners. As educators, we must play to all of our students' strengths and advantages.

As music educators, we have a special advantage when making an assessment an activity. Performance tests are a great way for students to show what they've learned about rhythm, harmony or solfege. We can also use a wide variety of instruments to make these assessments. Recorders, orff instruments, hand chimes are three common instrument types that would be familiar and easy for students to test with. Also, students could create and perform their own songs for performance tests to demonstrate understanding of harmony and homophonic or polyphonic reading and writing, while giving other students an opportunity to listen and describe.

In conclusion, the things I hold to be most true about music education are the availability of music education to every student and its importance in the balance of a well-rounded general education. Music is an important part of our world exceeding the boundaries of race, creed and culture. Understanding music and the ability to create music will be an invaluable asset to any student, regardless of his or her chosen profession.