

Philosophy of Music Education  
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Throughout the history of the world, music has been performed by all of its diverse cultures. The infinite number of forms in which music comes can be as countless as the means by which it is taught. Knowing that each student will learn at his or her own rate, how is an educator best able to teach such a subject?

The first step in teaching music is the realization that there is no such thing as a perfect teacher or musician. Both are works in progress. Educators and musicians try to correct their most obvious flaws, and continue by doing an assessment of what can be refined further. This reflection should continue throughout a teacher's professional life. Without a constant fine tuning of his or her skills, an educator cannot be as exemplary a professional as possible.

Minimizing flaws is not where great educators leave off. They must maintain a passion for their subject matter, and for the art of teaching. It is quite probable that many teachers who burn out look at their students as a means to the end of a perfect concert. Students should be valued for their own intrinsic worth, and their musicianship should be nurtured to further enrich their lives. Because music can affect a person like nothing else, students should be taught to appreciate wide varieties of it. This understanding of music, which should go beyond shallow aesthetics, will last long after their vocal folds have retired. This appreciation of music should be broad and encompass many kinds of diverse and multicultural music. When performing the music of other cultures, educators must be sure they are using it in a culturally appropriate manner. If proper care isn't taken, it could lead to the furthering of stereotypes. However, when done properly, it can leave students with a deeper understanding than they could obtain from a book.

It has long been thought that choir is an "easy A." Because of state regulated standards, teaching has changed, but the mentality in many areas has not. Students should be taught and graded the substance of music such as theory. They should not be glorified parrots learning their parts by rote. Students should receive their grades based upon the tangible completion of state and national standards. Keeping the standards in mind while planning a student's curriculum should always be priority. This should make the class appropriately challenging, but fairly simple for completion.

The issue of inclusion has become a hot topic, and many teachers find themselves dealing with a very diverse group of students. Through Individualized Education Plans (IEPs), teachers can decide the best plan for socializing students with learning disabilities. Music, because of its legitimacy in education, can be just as challenging as other core curriculum. Attendance at IEP meetings

is crucial in deciding whether or not to put a student with special needs into a music class or choir. Anyone with a voice and willingness to learn should be welcome.

Similar to church, everyone should have a place in his or her choir at school. Proponents of such an idea would likely support the completion of one semester of choir, or other music class, as a requirement for graduation. As is expected, some students will only show up because they are required to. Such students should be approached from any and every angle for the best opportunity to penetrate their minds. This not only stimulates the musical intellect of those students, but it further sharpens a teacher's abilities to educate in varied situations. Many tools are available for teachers through the marvels of technology that help reach such students, but just because something is new doesn't mean it's better.

Keeping up with the times is crucial to every job, be it manufacturing or marketing. No one wants to use outdated equipment, however, a resourceful teacher should be able to utilize the tools at his or her disposal. With models changing every year, it is important to not be wasteful with spending. Equipment should be purchased that will be used for many years, and not just a few. On the internet, free music software downloads and websites offering free choral music can be a blessing on a school district's budget. A savvy teacher's use of technology can make a dime stretch, while others may watch it burn.

"Those who can't do teach" is not the type of phrase this educator will ever utter because it is only through a person's knowledge of doing that he or she can accomplish great feats in teaching.