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Philosophy of Music Education

As I grow closer to the moment when I will give my first down beat as a music educator, I continue to pick up knowledge that will allow me to be the best teacher possible. I believe, now more than ever, that music is something everyone can take part in. Music is an art that is easily accessible to just about everyone, and it provides students with more that meets the eye. Participation in music can bring students closer to ideas of multiculturalism that cannot be reached in the history classroom alone. Music is also an art that has no boundaries, open to students of all kinds of backgrounds, including those who have special needs; allowing them to enjoy the beauty and excitement of music just like any other student. The bridging of these gaps, along with a strong interest in sharing my knowledge with others, is why I strive to teach music.

Working on projects in methods classes and through other educational oriented coursework, I have come up with a list of what a quality music education should include. It breaks down into two simple categories: classroom instruction and performance. Every level of music education, from elementary general music to high school bands, orchestras, and choirs, demand a certain amount of each of these two categories. I feel it is important to allow the students to explore the various elements of classroom instruction. Introducing concepts such as simple music theory, music history and literature, transposition, and multimedia education allow the students to expand their mind outside the typical music classroom.

Performance is also essential to a quality music education. Concert performance is a skill that students learn from the minute they begin music instruction. By teaching proper etiquette and teamwork, students understand what goes into a well-prepared concert. As the students progress, they should be introduced to elements such as field performance (band programs) and chamber music (all programs). All of the above performance situations will help students with intonation and other basic skills, self-reliance as well as cooperation and collaboration, and networking with others; not just becoming better performers.

The idea of only performing what is seen as standard band, orchestra, or vocal repertoire is cutting off the blood flow to the heart of music. Composers of all backgrounds continue to make beautiful music that is just waiting to be performed. A genre of music that is usually forgotten is world music. The introduction of multicultural music to the music classroom is essential to a complete music education. Collaborating with other departments in the school or with people in the community will allow students to explore a side of music that is often lost. The exploration of other music is also essential to a complete music education. Modern rock, hip-hop, and pop are all seen as genres of music that are not accessible to many people. However, to someone out there, it is music. An ensemble with an eclectic repertoire not only keeps people interested in music programs, it also keeps students in the music classroom.

Music for every child is a phrase that is used a lot, especially in the world of MENC. However, I have always felt that the basis of that statement seems to exclude an important part of the music program; other educators and supporters of music programs. I am more partial to the phrase *Music For All*, as this implies that music is not only for

music classrooms. A successful music educator would be sure to include their entire school community in the music program. Allowing others to experience the music as the students do will mold the views of supporters of music programs. This, in turn, will create more advocates and will ensure the strength and longevity of the music program. Music for all also includes those students that are disabled and may be unable to join in on other extra-curricular activities. The music classroom is the perfect place for students with special needs, as they can be just as creative as any other student. For students with special needs, inclusion in music and other arts is essential to a complete education.

Being able to accomplish all of these goals takes a special type of individual. A successful music educator should be compassionate, well educated, enthusiastic, and able to assess the progress of their students. The compassion shown by a music educator will draw students into the program allowing them to express themselves in a free and open musical environment. A well-educated teacher will be able to provide quality education that will, in turn, give students a strong understanding of their craft. An enthusiastic teacher will keep the students motivated and interested in music. Assessment will give the teacher tangible proof that learning is occurring. This will then allow the teacher to evaluate their teaching skills and give them a basis for any adjustment that may be needed in their curriculum. Efficient assessment would include not only performances, but also paper and pencil exams that test the students' general understanding of the music they are performing.

In closing, quality music education begins with a strong curriculum, followed by a teacher who can execute the curriculum efficiently and effectively. Students take the knowledge from the curriculum and use it to gain knowledge, which then can be used to

assess how well the students are learning. I believe that not only is music education part of a quality education, but also is essential to the positive growth of the students as well-rounded citizens. Music is a skill that students can use for a lifetime. It is also an outlet for creativity, expression, or even anger or happiness. Music is essential to a quality education. I hope to be able to teach this craft to all my students so they may have a complete, quality education.