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## **Philosophy of Music Education**

In a world where countries and cultures are divided by religion, politics, status and beliefs, there is still one language that remains universal: music. Whether it is studied, used as a hobby, used for sacred ceremonies, or simply enjoyed, music is something that is in everyone's life in one way or another. It has the ability to create emotions and express emotions that are otherwise inexpressible. The universality of music makes it important, and therefore, makes good music education that much more important. This is especially true at a time when music education is facing budget cuts and, in some areas, program cuts.

There are several aspects that go into being a good music educator. Obviously, there are general personality aspects that are required for any teacher, such as patience, reliability, and a positive attitude toward children. There are, however, further aspects that go into making the decision to become an educator in the music area. These considerable aspects should not first be considered when leaving college and becoming a teacher, but when choosing where the education is to be attained. For example, the growing number of children with disabilities being included in the general classroom is something to be considered in choosing a college. According to Darlene Fett's article on the MENC collegiate website regarding this issue, many universities do not educate their teachers-in-training about the laws associated with children with disabilities. It would follow that these same schools probably do not offer a lot in the way of methods of teaching these exceptional learners. Music is an area in which knowing how to include children with disabilities can be the difference between the entire class learning and enjoying the class, or not enjoying the class and associating a negative experience with music.

A negative experience with music can affect children of any age and any ability. It is important for every music educator to go into their classroom with a positive attitude and a use of positive reinforcement. In a subjective area such as music, positive and detailed assessment is a necessity. Regardless of talent or ability, there is always a way to give a student a positive experience with music,

and it is the job of the music educator to create this experience. Adequate assessment is not only important for continued motivation, but also for continued interest in music which, as stated earlier, is one of the areas in jeopardy of being eliminated. In Shawn Funk's article "A is for Assessment," he discusses the computer-generated report cards he uses to assess his students. Rather than give an explanation that is personal to each student's grade, he picks from a group of pre-generated responses that may be as vague as "follows classroom rules." This is not an adequate assessment for any student, much less a student in a subjective arts area.

This is not to say that technology is not a good thing. Music educators, however, must pick and choose the areas of technology that are beneficial to students and those that are not. Computer-generated report cards do not give students the necessary assessment they need, however many music-based computer programs are very beneficial, especially when a teacher is faced with a large class and not a lot of time. With the right research, music educators can find appropriate programs that can be used to enrich the lessons taught, and can also be a fun and rewarding way to help the students practice what they have learned. These programs should not be used in place of a teacher's lesson; however they can be great additions to said lessons.

Technology can also be a great way to introduce multiculturalism in a class. Many students that are brought up listening and learning "Western" music don't have a concept of world music. Music of other cultures should be explored not only for the interesting differences among cultures, but also to create a level of diversity in the classroom. This is also appropriate in respecting the different cultures represented by the children in the class. Although it is not practical to try to perform too many different types of multicultural music, CDs and videos can provide students an idea of the different sounds used around the world, as well as the different reasons music is used in other cultures. In addition to CDs and videos, the evolution of technology that has brought about the internet and websites such as "You tube" provide even more resources for students. Once again, however, technology should not be a replacement for a teacher.

With all of the important topics previously discussed, it is unfortunate that music educators are one of the groups facing budget and program cuts. Music can mean so many different things to different students. It can be an escape for them, it can create self-confidence, it can be a place for spending time with students with common interests, or it can even lead to a career later in life. This is true for students of all ages, which is why music education is a vital area for both primary and secondary education.

Although not every student will have a life-changing experience through music education, they should not be deprived of the opportunity for that experience. In addition to all the qualities mentioned earlier that make a good music educator, perhaps the most important of these is passion. This is important for the educator to enjoy their job, and also important for the students, because a passionate teacher is more likely to provide a positive experience in music education. Passion for music also provides an opportunity for advocacy to keep music education in the schools. A belief in the importance of music in people's lives, the ambition to teach such an important subject and the passion to promote the importance of music and be an advocate for it are the marks of a good music educator.