

Philosophy of Music Education
Kimberly A. Tatro
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

29 March 2007

As stated in a simple child's tune, "What would the world be like without music?" In response, I think the majority, if not all people would agree with me in saying that life would be rather boring. Music is used to engage our imaginations into expressing our deepest, most inner thoughts and feelings. Its uncanny way of describing beauty in nature, disputes amongst people, and the sound of silence is like no other. Music is the universal language; no translation is needed to understand the emotion a certain piece is trying to convey.

Music portrays facts along with our thoughts. Gloria J. Kiester states in her article "Teaching Music: For 'Feelingful' Intelligence," "In daily life we do not choose to think now in facts and later in feelings. We use both, inextricably combined, in order to comprehend. One without the other would be unthinkable. It is equally unthinkable to consider a school curriculum complete unless it fosters both ways of thinking." Music is essential to each and every individual life.

Applying a student's knowledge through authentic assessment is a great way to determine growth. This includes asking the student to evaluate his or her own performance, forcing them to be more conscious of their own effort instead of only looking for feedback, whether it be positive or negative, from the teacher. Peer teaching is also a very valuable way for each student to "prove" themselves and again, makes them more conscious of what they actually know.

Assessment in the classroom is important. However, the eventual "final grade" is not what truly matters. As an educator, it is our focus to be a caring intellectual in helping each of our students grow to be musically vibrant and independent individuals. The most important

assessment is exactly that – determining if the students are developing musically and will continue to use music for the rest of their lives.

As children with every sort of ability and disability are in music class, music teachers are given a great opportunity to be creative in teaching and truly stretching students to their utmost abilities. Paul R. Lehman states in his article “What Teach Music in School?” “Kids need opportunities in school to test the limits of their potential in as many domains of human endeavor as possible. Otherwise, they’ll never know what they could have achieved and they’ll never know how far they could have gone.” Teaching should never be thought of as a hassle, rather opportunity to share one’s own passion. Time is always of the essence, but with that extra time so many more lives can deeply be affected with the power of an education through music.

Children benefit from music courses in a number of different ways beyond musical aspects. Through music, strong practice skills are needed; students learn great discipline and time-management. By rehearsal, teamwork is needed in order to produce a quality product, and by performance, confidence is built into each student’s character. Students come to fully appreciate music by actively watching performances and videos, listening to recordings, and performing the repertoire itself. Thus, it is important to experience a wide variety of pieces: ranging from Baroque to Contemporary; from Finnish to English – each and every aspect of music needs to be included in the curriculum.

A different tune is played in each nook and cranny of the world. Each of these different tunes might be expressed as “world music.” As a music educator, it is important to bring out the fact that there are many types of “world music,” but more importantly, to teach how all of these different sorts of music fit in with that certain culture. By doing this, each student will receive a multicultural education, which is especially important in the United States. We are both a

“melting pot” and a “tossed salad” of many cultures. Pieces of our cultures begin to melt together to create a unique American culture, while others strictly remain as their own. To teach solely one culture in this vastly diverse country would be highly unfair to many people. For many White Americans, music is integrated into culture through the media or background noise only, while for many other cultures, music is an integral daily activity that is purposefully integrated into their daily lives. As an educator, we are able to teach that there are many different and equally valid ways of expressing one’s self musically in requirement to expose children to their own culture and those which they may or may not someday encounter. This is encouraged for a better understanding of all peoples in hopes of a better and more peaceful world.

References

Kiester, Gloria J. Teaching Music: For “Feelingful” Intelligence. In Bruce Pearson (Ed.), *Why*

Music is Basic: The Value of Music Education (p. 7). Neil A. Kjos Music Company.

Lehman, Paul R. (1995). *Why Teach Music in School?* In Bruce Pearson (Ed.), *Why Music is*

Basic: The Value of Music Education (pp. 2-3). Neil A. Kjos Music Company.