

Philosophy of Music Education
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“Music makes a difference in kid’s lives. It exalts the human spirit. It enhances the quality of life” (Lehman). Music education is a very important part of the school system. Every child is in need of a music education. Music is in every person’s life; he or she comes across it every single day. Through music education, students study and understand this music and are exposed to many other types of music, including those of other cultures.

Ever since I was young, music has been a large part of my life. My earliest experiences in music include my piano lessons beginning in kindergarten and my participation in church music. I always looked forward to music classes in grade school. When I began middle school, I joined band and choir. It felt amazing to be in a large group of people who wanted to sing or play music. I always enjoyed these band and choir rehearsals and performances. In eighth grade I had the opportunity to join the high school band. It was a great honor, and it really helped me enjoy music even more. Each year I participated in solo/ensemble and groups such as the Stevens Point City Band. All of these experiences contributed to my love of music, and, as a junior in high school, I decided to pursue a career in music in college.

I believe that students who study music will be better well-rounded future adults and will appreciate music throughout their lives. The public needs to know the importance of music, especially in a time where budget-cuts are threatening music programs. Music education is an important part of students’ education and it needs to be given the same priority as the rest of the programs in an academic setting. Students will gain self-confidence and a sense of accomplishment from achievements on their instruments. Not only do they gain skills for life after school for recreation and enjoyment, but also can improve vital skills such as special reasoning and hand-eye coordination through the process of instrumental education. Students who are introduced to music at this young age may also benefit in other areas such as improved performance in the academic setting, better test scores, enhanced communication and interpersonal skills, and increased creativity, cooperation, patience, and multitasking. I believe that students’ listening skills will improve through paying attention to other members in the ensemble. They will understand how every part/person is important in contributing to the whole.

Music is also an excellent form of expression. It can be an alternate form of communication for many students, and, through music, they can learn to express themselves, something that they might not have been able to do before.

Music classes may even help students find a talent for music that could shape the rest of their lives- a talent that could direct them towards a musical career. Every student

deserves the opportunity to find a passion for music that could be a part of his or her future career, or even as an activity that they could enjoy for the rest of their lives.

All students should have the opportunity to engage in music in their K-12 education. No child should be denied this right as a result of any diverse or special educational needs. Since music is beneficial to all, music can be used as a way to bring all students together that share in a common music experience in much of the music education classroom. Even if students have been removed from the regular education classroom to a less restrictive environment, they should still participate in the music classroom. Many students just need the opportunity to engage in musical experiences. Music reaches beyond many social differences that students are faced with every day, and acts as a true bonding experience between all students.

Students should study many different types of music in an education setting. Students should be familiarized with different types of music through the study of both Western and non-Western music. As they study music of different cultures, they learn about other cultures. Study of music from one's own culture can help him or her understand more about themselves and their history. This is why I believe that music taught in the classroom should have great musical, historical, and cultural values. The music should also have a theoretical value, which helps teach students theory, such as dynamics, structure, markings, voice dictation, and many other fundamentals of music. This knowledge will help them correctly play the music, as well as set a foundation for composition and improvisation.

Since music is a common connector for people throughout all societies, I believe that these many different types of music should be taught in the music classroom. Every cultural group has music that is important to its people. It connects their society and helps them maintain their heritage. It teaches their young about their past and passes down traditions. Much non-Western music can teach students studying in a music classroom about music, even though it might not be written down in a musical notation or come with specific dynamics and key signatures. It can not only expose students to different cultures' music, but also increase their knowledge of their own culture. I believe that multicultural music is very beneficial to students and helps create a well-rounded music curriculum.

I believe that assessment in music education is different from other core subject areas. Since musical knowledge goes beyond facts that can be memorized and then written down or recited on demand, assessment cannot only take place through standardized testing. On the other side, individual improvement cannot be assessed and documented in large-group performance assessments alone. Glenn E. Nierman (1997) says in his article, 'Tools for Assessing Musical Skills,' "Performance assessments must be made in terms of the individual's growth rather than group progress." In many middle and high school music settings, where though large group participation, students learn about music performance and theory, and then perform repertoire at a concert for community members. Many times this is the only assessment that the students are given. It may be hard for a student to feel like they are improving and growing in their musical skills when they are lost in the middle of twenty-eight flute students. Even though

standardized testing may be a useful assessment strategy in some situations, it should not be the solely utilized assessment strategy. Projects, portfolios, and presentations are also useful to evaluate student learning.

I believe that the music selected in music education should be age appropriate and should address the lessons being taught. The repertoire for the middle or high school ensembles should be carefully selected to include only the highest quality of band compositions. These pieces should include musical elements needed for a comprehensive musicianship curriculum. Repertoire should be carefully chosen in order to teach such musical concepts as performance on their instruments, music history, intervallic and key relationships, harmonic structures, composition, improvisation, sight-reading, and theory.

I believe that schools prepare students for a democratic society. The student should be able to critically think and should be prepared to transition into an adult society and foster a change for the good. John Dewey (1937) says:

[Students] may select the newer scientific, technological, and cultural forces that are producing change in the old order; may establish the direction in which they are moving and their outcome if they are given freer play, and are what can be done to make the schools their ally.

Therefore, I believe that educators need to involve their students in the classroom and make it more democratic. One way that I will do this is by getting the students involved when they bring examples of music that is important to them and touches them. We can discuss these examples as a class and relate them to such topics as music theory, history, and other genres of music. Since the large ensemble music educator's curriculum is often based on the choice of repertoire, students may have the opportunity to democratically choose a musically valid composition, which the band would study and perform. This will interest the students, facilitate learning, and include them in a democratic process.

Music educators should not only have a love of music, but also a passion for music and education. They have to be willing to help others learn more about music and want to share this great experience with their students. They have to be musicians themselves and know about the power of music. A teacher should be able to sing, play and be able to teach the band instruments, and be skilled on piano and guitar. The educator needs to be a well-rounded musician. Music teachers are also role models for their students and therefore should have many qualities and characteristics including enthusiasm, compassion, integrity, honesty, and a desire to put much effort into their job.

Music educators need to be advocates for music. They need to be good writers, well organized, and professional in all of their work. Teachers also need to have a large supply of energy, since music education, for them, is a way of life and not just a job.

Music is such an important part of everyone's lives and a fundamental component in education today. In order to create well-rounded future adults, students need a well-rounded education, and this includes music education. Music is something that will always be part of our culture and us.

Works Cited

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