

The Official Publication of the Arkansas Music Educators Association A Federated State Association of the National Association for Music Education

#### Opus 38 Number 2

#### February 2017

# Inside: Capitol MIOSM Registration Form

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# <u>Segue</u>

The Official Publication of the Arkansas Music Educators Association, A Federated State Association of the National Association for Music Education

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Arkansas Music Educators Association is a federated state association of the National Association for Music Education.

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#### SEGUE

*Segue* is published three times each academic year in September, February and May. Submission deadlines for the issues are 1 August, 1 January, and 1 April, respectively.

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It is hard to believe that we are beginning a new year, 2017. January 1st marked the beginning of my term as President of ArkMEA. As I begin to transition to my new role as president, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for those of you who supported the work of ArkMEA over the past two years. My primary work as president-elect was to serve as the program chair. The success of our professional development conference depends on

the collaborative efforts of all our board members, and we are fortunate to have outstanding teachers and musicians serving in key roles on the ArkMEA board.

First, I would like to recognize Paige Rose who, serving as past-president, has been an immense help over the past two years jumping in wherever needed. Much of her

work has been "behind the scenes" where she has helped plan meetings, worked on the professional development conferences, and posted important information on Facebook. Thank you Paige for your continued leadership in music education in Arkansas.

A huge thank you to Dr. Vicki Lind for her service to the ArkMEA organization. She is an incredible educator, leader, mentor, and friend. I have learned so much under her leadership and am looking forward to her continued support and mentorship as Past-President of ArkMEA.

In addition, both Vicki and I would like to thank the board members for their tireless work on behalf of ArkMEA. Jaree Hall not only serves as treasurer, she also serves as the State Executive. Marcia Brown has continued in her role as secretary and continues to make valuable contributions to our organization. Area representatives, Jenny Hainen (Elementary), Haley Greer (Festival Chorus), Nathan Evans (Innovations), Sarah Labovitz (Collegiate), Carrie Martens (Technology),

# President's Note

#### By Amber Moss

Brittany Osman (Orchestra), Bart Dooley (MIOSM), Laura Pollard (General Music), Jacob Richardson (Choir), Sheri Cook-Cunningham (Research), Sam Bentley (Marketing), and April Shelby (Band) have likewise worked to realize our mission of advocating for music education , providing professional development for music teachers, and celebrating the successes of all involved in music education in our state.

In the past year, region representatives have served as liaisons between NAfME and ArkMEA, keeping the teachers informed of opportunities and representing their regions at board meetings. Thank you to: Kerry Hymas (West Central), Lance Garner (East Central), Kathy Robison (Northeast), John Land (Northwest), and Gina Johnson (Southeast). I would like to also thank Kathy Robison for her years of service to ArkMEA and dedication to furthering music education throughout

# *ATTACA*: (music) without any break between the current movement and the next movement.

the state. I wish you nothing but the best in your future endeavors.

As we transition into new leadership positions on our ArkMEA board, I would like to say thank you to all those who have served ArkMEA, and those who are continuing to serve. I hope you'll join us at the 2017 All-state conference on Friday February 17th for a day of incredible professional development- "Kaleidoscope-Teaching Across the Musical Spectrum."

I look forward to serving you as your President and am excited about new beginnings and traditions.

Amber Moss ArkMEA President

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"CREATE SOMETHING THAT WILL MAKE THE WORLD MORE AWESOME." - Kid President



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#### **Building Momentum in Rehearsal**



One of the worst feelings a director can have in a rehearsal is to realize that the students are having as much fun as they would have in a dentist chair. I'd be lying if I said every rehearsal that I have had was productive, energetic, and engaging to my ensemble, and I would dare to say each

one of us have had at least one of these rehearsals. What should we do when we can feel the energy of our ensemble faltering like your New Year's resolution? (Did you go to the gym today? Yeah, me neither.)

Here are five potential strategies to energize a rehearsal:

#### Starting the Class

The first few moments of any class are vital to the flow and energy of that class time. The beginning of rehearsal is where the students are most engaged, and if it's boring and lacking momentum from the start, it will only deteriorate from there. Typically, there is no need to start rehearsal with a speech or pep talk, the students want to play and want to be challenged musically as soon as possible. Like many other aspects of the classroom structure, the beginning of class should have a procedure, as the start of class is critical for creating expectations for your rehearsal. Establishing a structured routine is imperative to a positive class environment. Lack of structure may be detrimental to the initial flow and the start of class. Often, precious time is lost within the first few minutes of rehearsal during the "getting ready" moments, when the most off-task behavior occurs. A student walking into a disorganized class may feel uneasy and anxious. Students entering a class that is disorderly may take the class less seriously or view the class as unimportant.

A signal to show that class is starting could be an array of cues such as: stepping on the podium, four "clicks" of a metronome, call and response of a rhythm (I say, you say), a raised hand, or a shut door. Regardless of the educator's signal, this signal should be used daily so that acceptable behaviors are reinforced. Nonverbal signals, over time, can be very effective in starting class. During these initial moments of class, it is vital to get the students involved in a musical activity. Save announcements or nonmusical related items like fundraisers for the end of class if at all possible.

#### Talk less, Smile More

Research demonstrates that students are more off-task when teachers are talking, and some research has indicated that excessive teacher talk has a negative impact on ensemble attitude (Napoles, 2007; Spradling, 1985). The majority of the students in ensembles would much rather rehearse then to hear us talk. (Shocking, I know!) I am not suggesting that directors should never tell stories or supply humorous anecdotes but as a whole, we talk too much! Stories and frequent interjections can stall a rehearsal's momentum.

Kenneth Goff

A general rule of thumb that I tell my music education students is if you cannot say it in eight-seconds or less, the students are no longer listening. When rehearsing an ensemble, diagnose one problem, prescribe the solution, and then listen again as you replay the section. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon during class to find a director citing a list of errors that need to be addressed. However, it is best to rehearse one concept at a time, allowing the students to focus intently on that one issue. As students begin to focus on one area to improve, often other non-addressed problems are fixed without the need to point them out to the ensemble. For example, when addressing a rhythm problem, tempo, articulation, and note accuracy may improve while working toward the correct rhythm. Although it may seem counter-intuitive, isolating single issues will save more time than trying to tackle multiple problems at once.

#### Sight Read

An often overlooked but important method of keeping students engaged is sight-reading. Sight reading requires students to engage in a task-oriented behavior, and can be an effective and educational approach to keeping students on-task. As a music educator, it is important to teach a method to the sight-reading process to optimize efficiency. Once a sight-reading method is established, many music educators sight-read daily to emphasize educational concepts. It provides a focused musical activity for the students, and on-task behavior will be increased. Sightreading does not need to take much rehearsal time but should be done daily. It does not always need to be a long song or piece but can be a simple rhythm exercise or chorale to heighten the students' focus. In a study by Armstrong (2001), ensembles that frequently sight-read spent less time rehearsing individual sections during

class time. Members of these ensembles also indicated a preference for classical music, students were less talkative during rehearsal, and students tended to be more focused on the score, even when their part contained rests. It may be advisable to have a sight-reading exercise accessible at all times to break up the monotony of a rehearsal or to bring the class into focus.

#### Select Appropriate Literature

It is not uncommon for directors to get overzealous with a group and attempt to conquer a work that "will force my ensemble to practice" (perhaps Stravinsky is not the best idea for 6<sup>th</sup> graders). Research suggests that students can be successful as long as the students are presented with concepts they understand with minimal new concepts. One study demonstrated that students found the most success when their understanding ranged from 70 to 93% of the material (Burns and Dean, 2005). Should you select literature that has too many new concepts or performance demands, frustration and off-task behavior may take place. Conversely, should a piece be too easy, frustration due to boredom can also emerge. There are countless resources that can help a director select appropriate literature for their ensemble: state music lists, festival programs, repertoire websites, and experienced colleagues are all valuable references. If a poor musical selection is made, admit the mistake and change it. Your students will be thankful.

#### Be prepared

The old adage "A good offense is a good defense" comes to mind when I think of rehearsing. Preparation is key to any successful rehearsal. Someone much wiser than me once said, "rehearse your group like you would an honor band." When I step into a rehearsal prepared and with that attitude, the chances of great things happening seem to increase. Do not expect your students to have an understanding of a piece if you are not prepared to teach and rehearse it. Author of "The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People", Steve Covey, said, "All things are created twice; first mentally; then physically. The key to creativity is to begin with the end in mind, with a vision and a blueprint of the desired result." To show your students your "blueprint", you must guide them in a sequence them through exercises and warm-ups. Selecting or writing chorales that follow the chord progression of a piece you are rehearsing is one way to lead your ensemble to success. Write a unison exercise for that tricky trumpet part so the entire ensemble can be engaged while you rehearse - it will help maintain effective engagement and pacing. Carefully planning sight-reading or a rhythm drill that logically sequences into the work you are rehearsing is often effective in conducting great rehearsals. Over-preparing a score will provide you with the knowledge to effectively maintain energy in a rehearsal.

Regardless of your experience as a music educator these suggestions can provide a framework to help build a more a more effective rehearsal atmosphere and structure. These techniques are reminders of ways to maintain effective rehearsal energy. Engaging as many students as possible throughout rehearsal should be a huge focus of what we do as music educators.

> Kenneth Goff is the new Director of Bands at University of Arkansas at Little Rock.

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#### **Developing a Well-Rounded General Music Curriculum**

#### Mari Schay Guest Article



I am a percussionist. As a kid, I always had a beat in my body, which usually oozed out through my fingers and toes, irritating those around me. I was never in choir --- never understood why anyone would want to be. Never sang in the shower. Nothing.

I assumed I would be a band director, but the job I found was elementary general music, kindergarten through eighth grade. Singing was

part of my curriculum when it supported something else – a game, an Orff arrangement, or a concert. We did a lot of rhythm reading, played recorders, played Orff instruments, played games. The kids didn't seem to want to sing and that suited me just fine.

Several years and three schools later, I asked my graduating sixth graders what they liked and did not like about music class. To my shock, they said they wanted to learn more songs! Shortly thereafter, I had a student teacher ask me if I even knew how to teach singing. Double blow. Time to re-evaluate.

I started looking into singing, really researching the pedagogy around teaching elementary school singers and delving into repertoire. The more I learned, the more I realized I had made a fundamental error in my thinking. I started developing my own voice so that I could develop my students' voices. I created a list of folk songs every kid should know and divided it up by grade level. I learned warm-ups, repertoire, and teaching strategies. I bought singing toys. I developed a singing rubric and strategies for assessing singers. I worked to created a "culture of singing" in my school, as Patty Bourne calls it.

And now, in year nineteen, singing is where it belongs in my curriculum: at the center. My students love to sing --- yes, even the fifth grade boys --- and so do I!

But, once I wrapped my mind around singing as an integral part of my curriculum, I realized that I really did not actually have a curriculum, as such. Instead, I had a series of activities that more or less developed music skills. There was nothing intentional or sequential and I did not really have an end-goal in mind as students headed off to middle school.

Once I made that realization, I knew I had a lot of work to do. I am still doing that work (and assume I will always continue to

revise and update my curriculum and the way I deliver it.) I'd like to share some of what I have learned in the hopes that it will help someone else with the process. These are just my thoughts and strategies, just one way to go about the very important job of developing and maintaining a well-rounded music curriculum.

**Follow a routine.** In my classes, we follow the same routine every day: sing – read – play.

#### The singing routine is:

- -- warm up with a toy (echo a slide whistle, vocally imitate the movement of a slinky, have a conversation in whale talk);
- -- two vocal warm-ups that address a specific singing skill (blend, consonants, vowel shape);
- -- sing a unison song;
- -- sing in harmony (round, partner song, or octavo) third grade and up.

#### The playing routine is similar to the singing routine:

- -- warm up with fingering exercises (recorder), echo rhythms (drums), scale patterns (Orff instruments), or something else appropriate to the instrument we are playing;
- -- work on a specific goal, such as part of an ensemble in unison, a specific part of a recorder song, or a new chord on ukulele;
- -- individual practice time with a specific goal;
- -- add the new skill to the old ones to create some sort of mini-performance / wrap-up.
- -- Your routine will differ from mine. It's not so important what the routine is, just that you have one in place and that the students know what it is.

Start at the beginning and the end and work your way toward the middle. What do you think your youngest students will know and be able to do on day one? What do you want your oldest students to know and be able to do on the last day before middle school? What are the key skills you want students to develop by the end of each grade? What is the progression of skills from that first day of kindergarten to the last day of fifth grade?

Let's look at rhythm reading as an example. At the beginning of kindergarten, about half of my kids can keep a reliable steady beat. At the end of fifth grade, I want my students to be able to use traditional counting syllables to read all note values from whole notes to beamed sixteenth notes and to have an understanding of triplets, eighth rests, and syncopation. So, I have developed a progression as follows:

*Kindergarten* - establish, maintain, and identify a steady beat; echo simple four-beat rhythms; identify the difference between beat and rhythm.

*First grade* – use rhythmic solfege to read a four-measure phrase of quarter notes, quarter rests, and beamed eighth notes while maintaining a steady beat; compose and perform a four-measure rhythmic phrase using known rhythmic values; expose students to beamed sixteenth notes and half notes and rests.

*Second grade* – use rhythmic solfege to read rhythms from whole note through beamed sixteenth notes in quarter-based time signatures; compose and perform a four-measure rhythmic phrase using known rhythmic values.

*Third grade* – re-introduce the same rhythmic components using traditional counting syllables; read fluently; use reading skills to learn new music independently; as a class, play three different rhythms in ensemble.

*Fourth and fifth* grade – continued practice with known rhythmic elements; introduce new elements as needed for repertoire (syncopation, eighth rests, eighth/sixteenth combinations, triplets, etc.); use reading skills to learn new music independently; as a class, play ensembles with as many different rhythmic layers as repertoire demands.

**Every student should find a musical passion.** This means exposing students to a wide variety of music skills and opportunities so that they can be successful at some aspect of music. In addition to singing and reading, a wide variety of instruments should be introduced, including melodic instruments (recorder, keyboard), rhythmic instruments (World Music Drumming, drum circles), harmonic instruments (guitar or ukulele), and ensemble instruments (Orff instrument and marimba.) Ideally, students will achieve some level of mastery on each of these instruments starting in third or fourth grade.

Then, toward the end of the year, give students the opportunity to specialize or become "experts" on one instrument. Choose an ensemble that has recorder, ukulele/guitar, Orff/marimba, and unpitched percussion parts and let each student choose which they want to play. I am always amazed at how well-balanced these ensembles typically are and how accurately kids can pick a part that matches their ability level. Giving kids the opportunity to choose their instrument gives them ownership over the music and allows them to feel confident as a musician while allowing for a tremendous amount of differentiation.

#### Deliver instruction with passion, intensity, intentionality,

**and joy.** It is not enough to provide opportunities. I recently read that people don't quit jobs, they quit bosses. This relates to teachers: kids don't love subjects, they love the teachers of those subjects. We must be positive and encouraging while still being sincere. We must find a way to enjoy our students and enjoy their learning. We must remember that, even though we have taught

a song forty times in ten years, today is the students' first time to learn it. In my district, the curriculum director reminds us that we must focus on each student's journey. Every single child deserves to love music. They will only develop that love if they are taught with passion.

This is hard to accept, but if your students don't like music, or some aspect of music, then you are not teaching the way they deserve to be taught. If your students groan when you ask them to sing or are destructive when you bring out the drums, then there is something about your instruction or delivery that is reinforcing those attitudes. For your own sake and for the sake of your students, it is essential that you be self-critical enough to identify your weaknesses (while celebrating your strengths) and work to overcome them. Talk to colleagues; research new strategies; video your teaching; ask trusted students for input; ask your principal to let you observe another teacher; ask for an extra observation. Do whatever it takes to keep all aspects of your curriculum and instruction at the best level you can achieve.

We have all had the experience: What do you do? I'm a teacher. What do you teach? Elementary music. Oh, that must be so fun!

If your answer isn't, "yes, it is!" then figure out what you need to change so that, even on the worst day of the year, when you are tired and grouchy, you can still remember that you have a great job and that you can make a positive impact on every child.

Mari Schay is the (Oregon) OMEA General Music Chair

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#### What Kids Want in the Music Classroom

#### Dorothy Morrison

#### **Guest Article**



A new school year is well underway and it's time to reflect about what to do in the music classroom. But before you think about what *you want* to do, let's think a moment about what *kids want* you to do. What do they want from time spent in music class? My list includes four things – quality musical experiences, skill building, performance, and joy.

A few years back I was on playground duty when a 2nd grade girl came up and said, "Mrs. Morrison I need to talk to you." She pulled me aside and confided, "I just wanted to tell you that none of the kids in my class like the songs you are teaching in music." What!!!??? Immediately I was on the defensive and said (her name has been changed to protect the truth-sayer). "Welvl you know Ashley, I only see you for half an hour every three school days and it takes a long time to learn lyrics so, Ashley, I have to teach songs that we can learn quickly." Next day she showed up to music class with a petition including all the names of her classmates even a kid who was brand new and had never been to my class. The petition had two columns for check marks - a "like" column and a "don't like" column. Guess which column had the great majority of check marks, including the kid who had never been to my class?!! She may have been precocious, but that little girl taught me that even 2nd graders need music to feed their soul, a quality musical experience. The functional songs I was using, songs that teach la-so-mi or mi-redo or steady beat or the half note pulse, just don't cut it all year long. There's no meat, there's no transcendence.

Speaking of mi-re-do, I did not grow up using solfege, the hand signs for melodic dictation. So I've always been surprised at how willing and enthusiastic young singers embrace them. What I've learned is that young students *want* to learn musical skills. Solfege, because it involves a physical as well as vocal skill, is immediately attainable and kids know that they are learning something musical. The first time a 4th grade student plays *Hot Cross Buns* he feels like John Coltrane. Teach a 5th grader a hand clapping game and you will see it out on the playground. Kids want to have musical skills, to be able to play songs and sing songs. They enjoy having a personal music repertoire and they feel success at mastering something that takes practice. Which leads me to performance. Why is it that performance can engage even the most distracted and unfocused child? A young student's favorite words from a teacher are "We're going to do a play!" I've come to the conclusion that performance is part ego, showing off what each can do individually, but at a young age, even more important, being part of something bigger than oneself. Performance is authentic experience. It has risk, it has rigor, it is irrevocable. It is real and most children want to be part of it. Young students want to have applause and the deep feeling that an audience larger than themselves appreciates them.

For the young child quality music experiences, skill building and performance *is* the job of a music educator. I should note that they also want us to do it with JOY. Singing, dancing, listening, playing and creating should elicit joy in all of us. My biggest compliment: "Music class is over already?" Then I know we've had a joyful experience together.

What a wonderful challenge and reward teaching music to young children. I'm extremely fortunate to spend my days engaged in this noble and joyous pursuit. In closing, I wish you a very joyful school year. At this year's MMEA conference I will pass the presidential baton to our next president Laura Curtis. Many thanks for this opportunity to serve you and I look forward to our continued success as an organization.

Dorothy Morrison teaches Elementary General Music in Missoula, MT.

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National Association *for* Music Education

#### **Program Notes: Engaging the Audience**

#### Joseph Higgins Guest Article

When I attend performances by professional orchestras, I always hurry to my seat, open the concert program, and begin to read about the first selection. And if I read fast enough, before the house lights go down, then I am prepared with a better context for the music that I am about to hear. Perhaps, for example, I now know that this eleven-minute piece will feature a melody from a Hebrew folksong, or that the composer was a student of Messiaen, or that the music was originally conceived as a ballet score. The orchestra's professional editor usually writes these notes, and they are aimed at a specific audience of orchestra patrons. But the purpose of quality program notes to better engage listeners in the experience of a piece – relates to the performances of our student ensembles, as well. From my experience, the creative application of program notes can enhance any concert experience for both the audience and the performers.

When writing program notes, you must first *consider the audience*. Are you writing primarily to untrained musicians? Will any music professionals be attending? Balance your writing to a diverse audience. You do not want to insult the reader by "talking down" to them, but you must also not ignore those readers who have very little prior knowledge. Not every minute detail about a piece is necessary or meaningful to every audience. The same piece of music might merit two different descriptions when dealing with two unique audiences. For example, I would prepare adult listeners at a state-level music conference much differently than the fifth graders at a Music In Our Schools Month assembly performance.

Use the program notes to *put the piece in context*. Explore the environment in which a piece was composed, including any relevant political, literary, artistic, or social movements. If the composer is well known for a work other than the one being performed, then find a way to reference the more famous piece of music. If there are known source materials, such as the lyrics to a folksong arrangement, then share them. Provide a sense of the work's history, perhaps including its premiere performance, important past performances, or interesting information about its commissioning. What has happened to the piece since its premiere? Has it been rewritten or adapted? Has it inspired other great works of art or literature? Was it lost and rediscovered? You must sift through these facts and choose which to include, which are the most relevant to your performance.

Writing program notes is an opportunity to think creatively about how to best prepare listeners for the music they will soon hear; likewise, it is an opportunity for teachers to engage their students with these ideas. When the concept of considering the audience is brought into the rehearsal room, instructions such as "Begin your decrescendo sooner!" or "Play this 6/8 melody with more lilt!" take on a new sense of urgency. Rather than play "with more lilt" just because I said to, play with more lilt because the music is a joyous dance, because this joyous dance should leave all audience members smiling and swaying from side to side in their seats. Music is an art of communication, and communication requires that a message be both sent and received.

I believe that we, as artist-teachers, should approach every task with artistic intent. In addition to - or in place of traditional printed program notes, consider more creative ways to present this same information. Recently, before a piece that is inspired by electronic dance music, I played for the audience a few short examples of EDM songs. These recordings provided an audio context for the subsequent listening experience, one that many audience members would not have otherwise known and one that written words could not have created. Another recent performance featured a composer's musical adaptation of a Shakespearean sonnet. Rather than just read the sonnet text in program notes, audience members were treated to an onstage performance of the sonnet by a professional Shakespearean actor. I would also strongly encourage teachers to "step away from the microphone" and invite their students to speak between pieces. This not only teaches our young performers how to engage with an audience, it enhances their sense of pride and ownership of the ensemble.

The next time your group has thoroughly prepared a piece for concert performance, lead a group discussion about how to best introduce each work to the audience. What information should be included? What should be omitted? Would it help to guide the audience's listening by previewing a short excerpt of an important musical theme, or would it be better for them to be surprised by certain elements in the piece? These thoughtful discussions will help bring pieces to life in new ways for you, your students, and your audiences.

Joseph Higgins is Director of Bands at Rowan University.

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#### **Capitol Concerts Application**

#### 2017 ArkMEA Capitol Concerts March 17, 2017 **MIOSM Participation Application**

Please type or print all information legibly. Application deadline is **February 24, 2017**.

Please send your application to:	Bart Dooley 19 Deerwood I Conway, AR 7 <u>dooleyb@conv</u>	2034	<u>s.net</u>		
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#### Music Inspires - Singing at the Capitol!



Segue: Sept 2016

#### **Music In Our Schools Month**

#### by Bart Dooley



School musical ensembles from across Arkansas are invited to gather at the Arkansas State Capitol on March 17<sup>th</sup> to celebrate the national observance of "Music in Our Schools Month." MIOSM began as a single statewide Advocacy Day celebration in New York in 1973. It has grown to become a month-long nationally recognized celebration of school music during March. Engaging music educators, students and communities from around the country in promotion of the benefits of high quality music education programs in school is the goal of MIOSM. The first concert held for the celebration was in 1985.

This year's Capitol concert and celebration will include individual school performances along with a mass choir formed by the participating ensembles singing traditional patriotic songs that every young American should learn. The concert will include The Star-Spangled Banner, America, America the Beautiful,

This Land is Your Land, and God Bless America. NAFME also has an original song that was composed to be sung at MIOSM celebrations all over the country. Other highlights of this event include a special musical presentation by a keynote speaker and advocacy speeches by the ArkMEA president. There will be a Capitol Staff Photographer photographing the group.

There are many other ways to celebrate Music in Our Schools Month. Several wonderful ideas are mentioned on the NAFME webpage, such as changing your profile picture to this year's MIOSM logo. For more information, please contact me!

#### Bart Dooley

< dooleyb@conwayschools.net >













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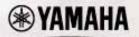
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#### **A Work in Progress**

#### Jacqueline Kelly-Mchale Guest Article

This issue of the state journal will arrive well into the middle of the year. It will come after we have all learned new student names, learned to navigate a district or school initiative and generally settled into the life as it will be for school year 2016-17. However, for beginning teachers, those who are beginning their first, second and even third year in the classroom, the start of the year can be as overwhelming as it is exhilarating. A few years back, a former student called me a few weeks into the school ready to walk out. The situation was not anything close to the way it had been represented in the interview process. This new teacher felt betrayed by her new administration and alone in an unfamiliar atmosphere. Often for new music teachers, the transition from college to career So despite the forward momentum that has been achieved, I still feel the desire to reflect on past starts of the school year and reflect of what I have gained and what I have learned for the benefit of those of you who are entering your first, second, or even third year of teaching.

1. You will make mistakes. Everyone does and it is important that you learn to embrace every misstep. Sometimes it feels easier to ignore or downplay mistakes; however, the best thing about mistakes is that they are really opportunities for growth. For example, if you missed a deadline for placing an order or choosing concert dates, then use that experience to evaluate your organizational skills. Perhaps you need to update your calendar and start learning to create lists. Maybe what you really need is to give yourself 30 minutes every Sunday night to sketch out what needs to be done the following week. Whatever it is, take your mistakes and make them work for you.

2. Going from being a member of a defined group of like-minded people to being the only music teacher, or a member of a small group of music teachers, in the building can be difficult. As an undergraduate music education student, you were a member of what I like to think of as a few groups of concentric circles. The smallest and closest circle was comprised of fellow music education students. This group was the most like-minded group because you believed in the importance of teaching music. This is the circle where you talked about your failures and successes, where you complained about assignments and expectations, and where you probably socialized. The second circle was the rest of the students in your music school (college, program). These were the people who you shared music history, theory, and aural training experiences with and the people who you played in ensembles with; this circle supported you as a musician. It may not have understood your desire to teach, but it understood your desire to perform. The final circle was made up of all of the nonmusic school students whom you may have become friends with through classes, dorm activities, or non-music organizations. This group may not really "get" why you do what you do, but they supported your desire and drive. Moving into a teaching job flips your circles. You go from having that first circle right there all of the time, to having the third circle surround you. The important

thing here is to recognize that the first circle is always accessible, you just need to work harder at creating the accessibility. Be sure to reach out to the circle comprised of new music teachers circle and to keep those relationships going. The third circle that you will now spend every day with provides you with a wonderful opportunity to cultivate new relationships. Listen to your nonmusic teaching colleagues. Seek out classroom teachers when you have questions about schedules, management, or school culture. Don't assume that they "don't get" what you are doing. Instead, try and view your job through their eyes. Once you begin to do a whole new world of opportunity will open to you and will enrich your teaching.

**3.** Management is hard, but not impossible. You are the teacher, not the friend, not the parent. Smile and set boundaries for your classes/ensembles. Hold students accountable and be clear regarding your expectations. The child who is acting out is probably not doing so because of you. You just happen to be on the receiving end of something else that is going on. Find out who the student is and what is going on for that student. Before you assume that the student hates you or your class, or has it out for you, step back and get to know the student. Build a relationship based on understanding and respect, not on a vision of compliance.

**4.** Evaluations are a big part of teaching. You will be observed numerous times over the course of your first year. Take this process and view it as an opportunity, not a dog and pony show. Listen to your evaluator, even if they don't know music, because they do know a lot about teaching and we all need to learn. The best teachers are constantly learning, and as an early career teacher, you have a lot to learn!

\*\*\*\*\*\*

In the end, we all look back and reflect on what we have done. The best thing about teaching music is that you have provided countless students with the opportunity to not only learn and grow musically, but to connect through the beauty that is music. As I reflect on my k-12 teaching experiences I am overwhelmed with great memories of students and parents who have impacted my life. I can only hope that I have a positive impact on their lives. I will never know for sure, but I will always have a hunch. Carry that hunch with you and do the best job that you can, understanding that you are, and will always be, a work in progress.

Jacqueline Kelly-McHale is Associate Professor and Director of Music Education at DePaul University in Chicago IL (jkellymc@depaul.edu)

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# Should Music Follow Other Disciplines byRichard LymanAdopting an Individualized-Assessment Model?Guest Article

"I am so glad you came tonight; Michael's made so much progress this semester," beamed Michael's ninth-grade algebra teacher, Mrs. Gonzales, as she greeted Michael's parents. "He started the semester a bit behind, as you can see from his early low test scores and frequently missed assignments, but since my conference with him, he has moved right up to where he is supposed to be. His test scores have improved, and he hasn't missed an assignment in a month!" After another few minutes chatting with Mrs. Gonzales, Michael's parents walked across the junior-high cafeteria floor to meet with Mr. Johansen, Michael's band director. He greets them warmly and asks whose parents they are. "We are Michael Jorgensen's parents," Michael's mother explains and then cheerfully asks, "So how is Michael doing on trumpet?" "Um . . . he's doing very well," replies Mr. Johansen and then after a brief pause, methodically continues. "He has no tardies or absences and seems to be a pretty strong player. I'm really glad to have him in the band."

While Michael's parents may not have thought too much about the differences between the information they received from these two teachers, the time has definitely come for music educators to earnestly think about the differences between these two conferences and the associated assessment methods. For decades, teachers of other disciplines have been expected to keep detailed records of each student's progress, while music educators have remained largely aloof from such expectations because of ensemble performance expectations and the challenges of assessing a subjective and abstract art form. This article aims to answer the following question: Is the ensemble focus sufficient, or do music educators need to adopt more individualized approaches to assessment?

#### What Is an Individualized-Assessment Model?

For Mrs. Gonzales, individualized assessment probably seems like the only viable approach, and maybe it is, at least with math. Administering tests and giving assignments that are completed and graded individually is seen as part of the job description for teachers of most subjects in school. This predominant focus on the assessment of individual student work, participation and competence is an individualized-assessment model. The issue for music educators is whether this model should apply to their music-performance classrooms.

#### What Model Have Music Educators Used in The Past?

Mr. Johansen's approach illustrates the ensemble focused assessment model that has been endorsed by the music education discipline since its inception, with a focus on performance products rather than individual progress. In other words, individual student progress is a byproduct but not the goal, because Mr. Johansen's focus is on achieving high-level group performances in concerts and festivals - and not unreasonably so, since concerts and festival ratings are what parents and administrators have come to expect and are willing to support. That is what is visible to them, and that is the precedent that has been set by the music discipline (Burrack p. 27).

We might consider Mr. Johansen's approach "teacher centered"

(as compared to "student-centered") not because Mr. Johansen is self-centered, but because his main focus is on the most visible representation of his teaching—his ensemble's performance not the individual achievements of his students. The problem with this approach is well illustrated by the idea of a math teacher having his grades based on group math tests. Were this the case, one could expect very high grades from his classes, high achievement in solving very complicated problems, and a very collaborative environment. However, this approach would also pose serious drawbacks for students performing below grade-level who would continue to get good grades and correct answers as they copied their on-level peers, while their actual understanding would fall further behind as the class moved to more advanced concepts.

While there are definite benefits to collaborative learning, this approach allows students to slip through the cracks of Mr. Johansen's program and every other school music program with a group-performance orientation.

That being said, most ensemble directors deeply care about their students and have a strong understanding of their individual abilities. However, these directors are very limited in their ability to reach struggling students if they follow a group-assessment model. In fact, the only deficiencies that will be improved in a group assessment model are the ones the director hears (through the sound of fifty or more players) and addresses in class. As a result, this approach offers no guarantee that each student or even most students are becoming young musicians.

#### How Might Individualized Assessment Be Implemented into a Secondary Music Classroom?

Mr. Johansen probably wonders where he would even start in implementing an individualized-assessment model in a program of two-hundred students. Researchers suggest that individualized assessment begins with collaboratively developing clear and detailed criteria and deciding what kinds of musical behaviors are desired from students and concepts associated with these behaviors, then creating corresponding instruction.

Mr. Johansen may feel like he is already doing that. However, there is a substantial difference between calling the concert music your curriculum and thoughtfully identifying what competencies you want your students to achieve and then planning concert music, assessments, and instruction to support your chosen curriculum. As for Mr. Johansen, thoughtful long-term learning objectives, rather than well-planned concert sets, are the place to start.

After a framework of learning objectives has been established, Mr. Johansen can then begin to explore the many ways his objectives can be observed and measured. Many teachers use rubrics to add objectivity to the assessment of student performance, finding that the most helpful rubrics lead to specific feedback. Checklists and rating scales can also serve as quick assessment. As rubrics, checklists and rating scales are given to students before exams and are paired with concrete examples of their work, students will take an active role in seelf assessment. More long term methods of assessment could include:

- student portfolios (made up of essays, music compositions, audio recordings, etc.)
- music technology programs (such as *Smart Music* and *Idoceo*)
- semi-annual interviews
- weekly in-class playing tests
- recorded playing tests with online submission
- daily response journals revealing student progress and thinking about music
- music theory workbooks

Mr. Johansen would also be wise to observe other secondary music classrooms built around an individualized-assessment model. Such classes would likely begin by reading the daily learning objectives and then proceed to skill development and repertoire rehearsal. Skill development (through technical exercises, sectional activities, and individual learning activities), would correspond to the short and long-term learning objectives chosen by the teacher. Group and individual rehearsal time would allow for student collaboration and one-to-one studentteacher interaction. Repertoire would correspond to short and long-term learning objectives and would authenticate and contextualize the skills worked on during skill development. Additionally, the teacher would continually seek to facilitate active self-assessment in his students.

#### What Are The Challenges of and Solutions for Individualized Assessment?

After considering these ideas and observing other teachers, Mr. Johansen might still question if the benefits of individualized assessment really outweigh the drawbacks. After all, the approach he has been using is working well enough. Challenges that make individual assessment so difficult seem obvious: performance pressures, large numbers of students in music classrooms, high teacher-student ratios, and time limitations. Performance pressures are a real issue for Mr. Johansen. If the next concert is weak because he put all his time into administering individualized assessments, he will lose the credibility he has spent years working to build.

Individualized assessments will increase, not decrease, the level of performance if they are done correctly. One researcher (Burrack 2002) recorded this telling student response to individualized assessment: "Without the assessments, I am very sure that I would not have worked as hard on my own." This simple response illustrates the way in which individualized assessment actually improves student motivation and performance. Mr. Johansen probably agrees that motivating students to practice their music independently will improve performance more quickly and more permanently than drilling and spoon-feeding the most difficult concert music passages to students during class. In other words, Mr. Johansen doesn't have to choose between high-level group performances and individualized assessment; in fact, the two are mutually beneficial.

Time limitation is likely the most difficult obstacle for most music educators. Research by Gerringer (2009) suggests a way to reduce the arduous evaluation time for all-state-orchestra audition recordings by 75 % is by evaluating only one minute of a four-minute audition recording yielded the same results (reliability) as evaluating the entire four minutes: "In regard to length, it would appear that material as short as one minute in length is sufficient to produce accurate and reliable results" (p. 44). In this study, students were not negatively affected, and the evaluators were able to spend substantially less time assessing recordings. Similar practices could definitely be applied to performance assessments in music classes. And Burrack commented "Listening to nearly one hundred tapes and reviewing the self-assessments takes about three hours per quarter. As compared to an English teacher reading twenty or so term papers in a quarter, this seems a reasonable investment of time outside of class" (p. 29). Others have remarked that they would rather listen to student music recordings than grade papers like teachers in other disciplines, and digital submission methods (such as *SmartMusic*) will avoid unruly stacks of papers. Individual assessment takes time outside of class, but it doesn't have to be unmanageable.

#### Conclusion

Imagine this different exchange between Mr. Johansen and Michael's parents: "It's been very exciting to watch Michael progress this quarter!" explains Mr. Johansen. "He received full points on his quarterly playing test and has showed tremendous improvement in his style and intonation. And look at this journal entry he wrote last week explaining why he makes time for music: 'When I play the trumpet, my shyness evaporates. I suddenly become bold and courageous and my worries about fitting-in seem to temporarily disappear.' He has a passion for music!" declares Mr. Johansen. Equally delighted, Michael's parents are at a pleasant loss of words on hearing about the success of their son in such specific and measureable ways.

This might not be the result for every child who receives individual assessment-based instruction, but a scenario like this is certainly possible for many. This approach will reach more students and more strongly foster musicianship than a group-assessment approach. If music teachers embrace an individualized assessment model, they can expect an increase in student motivation, in their motivation as teachers, an increase in parent and administrator support, and continual improvement in their pedagogical effectiveness.

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Richard Lyman is a recent graduate from Brigham Young University, and is teaching 7-8 band and choir in Franklin McKinley School District in San Jose, CA.

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#### Making the Case for Staying After **School: Recruiting and Retaining**

#### Christine Harrington **Guest Article**



Sadly, string programs are typically the first to go when a school district is facing budgetary problems. Often the string program has fewer students than either the band or choral programs. Let's face it, beginning string students are hard to teach and harder to listen to! You will most likely have large class sizes of mixed instrumentation for a

total of 30 minutes; much of which will be taken up with setup, tuning, and packing up to go back to the regular class.

I remember the first elementary string concert I attended. I was the middle and high school orchestra teacher and my son was a 3rd grade violinist. I thought he was very good for a beginner but I was shocked at how awful the string ensemble sounded! This was, by all standards, a very good elementary

string ensemble taught by a truly gifted teacher! I thought if I had a hard time listening to this music even though I understood what it takes to learn these instruments, what must non-musicians be thinking? How do they rationalize the financial commitment of renting an instrument and hauling the larger instruments back and forth to school? What makes

these parents allow their children to continue in the orchestra program?

Many children have to convince their parents to let them continue in a string ensemble. For this to happen, those children must feel good about learning to play. Happy students will stay in your program, and all parents want their children to be happy. If they feel successful, they will be happy. If they believe that you care about them and about their success, they will believe they are an integral part of the ensemble and they will want to stay. If they want to stay, they will stay.

I believe most parents see value in the band programs. Even if they know nothing about music they can derive pleasure from seeing their child march in a parade and perform in a pep band or on the football field during half time. School administrators also easily see the value in having a band program that is often visible to the community via parades, sporting events,

and school pep rallies. Chorus is an easy choice for parents to support since there is no financial investment in an instrument. String programs can, and should, be strong enough to elicit the same respect from the administration and parents. String ensembles can, and should, be asked to perform for a variety of school functions. There are many functions, especially at the high school level, that are appropriate for the string ensemble sound. An after-school chamber ensemble that focuses on the music in the gig book that you have compiled will always be ready to perform when asked.

In order to help your students be as successful as possible, I believe that you have to offer after-school help. Typically, there are only a few students who will stay after school at any given time to get extra attention from you. Extra attention makes them feel more special, gives your students more confidence as to their value in the ensemble, and helps them be better musicians.

I am not advocating for staying after school every day – I like my free time as much as anyone! Many schools offer a stipend to music teachers. If you are fortunate enough to get one, great! Regardless of whether you are paid for your extra time, the benefit to your program and your students is well worth it. I have known many music teachers over the past thirty-five years; the great ones do what they need to do to help

> their students become their best. The great ones do not count dollars but, rather, count student success.

Not sure how to make staying after school enticing?

I would offer two days per week for after school help. You know your group

of students best and can decide whether to split those two days into separate levels or by instrumentation. Let the after school activity be a little different than the school routine. Snacks are always a hit, especially with the high schools kids who seem to be hungry all the time. Discount stores offer quantities of nut-free snacks in individual bags, as well as low-cost cases of water. Very little money is needed to purchase these items, yet that investment will go a long way toward building a sense of community within your after school group. Nobody really wants to extend the school day so be playful, be your out-ofschool self. You must participate in the music making. Play an instrument with them. This should not be detention but a special time for you and them; a get-together to jam ... and learn. Be honest with your assessment of the students' work, but seek out those things a student does well that can be complimented.

Obviously, the different levels present different issues with outof-school time.

#### Many children have to convince their parents to let them continue in a string ensemble.

#### **Elementary School**

Staying after school at the elementary level might be difficult for a variety of reasons. If your schedule allows it, you would be more successful meeting for extra help before the regular school day begins. Even 20 minutes before school would reap benefits for you and your students!

- Elementary aged children's body clocks are such that they are more awake in the morning than in the afternoon. This means that you will actually be able to teach your students at a time when they will be more likely to retain that information.

- They already have a long day and will be too tired to do much of anything after school.

- They are usually just happy to be in the program with their friends, regardless of their musical expertise.

- Parents can usually drop their children off at school early, but often those same children have to go to an after-school day care or activity until mom/dad comes home from work.

#### **Middle School**

Middle school students love to stay after

school with their teacher, especially when they can get extra attention. Staying after with middle school students works very well for these reasons:

- Parents are usually supportive of after-school help and activities at this stage and are at least somewhat committed to the orchestra program, having rented an instrument for two or three years.

- Self-confidence among middle school children can be fragile. Extra attention from you will help them develop confidence.

- Working with a few other students may generate some new friendships within the ensemble. Friendships almost always help with retention.

- Working with a small group allows you to get to know your students better. Ask them some personal questions. What did they do on the weekend? What is their favorite part of middle school? Ask them how they are doing in general? Talk to them!

- Ask each student what he/she would like to work on, how he/ she would like to use this time with you. I believe most students know where they need help. Certainly you will know but giving them a voice is empowering.

#### **High School**

By the time your orchestra students reach high school they will hopefully be committed to the program. Of course, you will have a wide range of abilities among your students. Some may want to stay after school because they are struggling and others might be looking for a bigger challenge than that which they get in orchestra class. Staying after school at this level is important!

- It is vital to offer an additional playing ensemble to your more advanced musicians. Put together a "gig" book to use with any student who is willing to stay after school to play. Fill the book with music that would be appropriate for special school events: honors night, school spirit week, principal's meetings, open house, etc. Be sure to include a variety of styles – jazz for strings, well-known light classical pieces, rock, and fiddle. There is a wealth of music available at very playable levels. Feel free to contact me at cellobrate@aol.com for more information on repertoire.

- Allow your struggling students to participate in the special ensemble after school. The experience will most likely lift them

#### ... to help your students be as successful as possible, I believe that you have to offer after-school help.

up and help them develop better performance skills. You can ask these students if they want to play with the group after school but not perform with them. It is empowering to give students this choice, to ask them to assess their own playing and performance readiness. Of

course, you may have a student who is so far below the others, and is oblivious to this fact, that he or she will really drag the ensemble down. In this case, I would gently let the student know that in my (expert) opinion he or she is not yet ready to play with this group, with "yet" being the key word. I believe in always leaving room for hope of improvement.

If your students feel happy coming to your music room, if they feel musically successful to some degree, if they feel valued both in their contribution to the ensemble and to the orchestra community, and if they believe you care about each one of them, you will have a successful program, and you will be able to ask more of them musically. You will be able to challenge your students to do the hard work, to be responsible members of the orchestra by learning their individual parts. Only the combination of this hard musical work plus the belief that each person in the ensemble is valued will lead to happy students; students who are proud to be in the orchestra, an administration who is proud to have the string students perform for special school events, and parents who value their child's participation in your program.

Your rate of retention and recruitment of new students will be high. Everyone wins!

Christine Harrington teaches orchestras at Cranston HS West and Western Hills Middle School in Cranston, RI

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#### ACROSS CRYSTAL LAKE ROAD: Real connection in the digital age

#### Matthew Westgate Guest Article



Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp in Twin Lake, Michigan, celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2016, and I have been fortunate to teach there for the past thirteen summers. The camp property is divided in half by Crystal Lake Road, a paved, two-lane road that is heavily trafficked while parents are dropping off or picking up their kids at the beginning and end of each session, but is relatively quiet during camp.

On one side of Crystal Lake Road, close to two thousand student musicians, dancers, actors, and artists live in bunk-bed cabins with cabin counselors. On the other, faculty members and their families stay in Faculty Village. We all wear a camp uniform. It is one of the many regulations that help create a sense of unity and timelessness to the place. Another camp policy does not allow campers to bring any technology with them (smartphones, iPads, laptop computers, etc.) or use digital technology throughout their two-week session. The faculty members and their families do not have the same restrictions while in Faculty Village. *On one side of the road it is 2016; on the student side it can feel like it is 1986*.

One afternoon on my way to rehearsal, I was struck by the stark contrast between these two worlds. While walking through Faculty Village I passed three faculty members' kids, maybe tento twelve years old, that were "playing" on the swings of a swing set. All three were hunched over gazing at smartphone screens -- not swinging, not looking at each other, or even talking to one another. Two were wearing headphones.

Continuing my walk, I crossed over Crystal Lake Road to the other side of camp and stepped into rehearsal. Campers were talking, laughing together, setting up equipment, and warming up together. The room was alive. The campers were engaged with one another. All of this was going on even before the music started! These two moments, so starkly juxtaposed next to each other in a matter of minutes, solidified for me just how important music, and learning how to really connect with one another, is to the development of our students and society. Technology and distraction is everywhere in our modern world. Our role in society as music educators and artists has never been more important.

To help us begin to understand our students and their technology habits, here are a few facts: The 2015 Common Sense Media Census documented that outside of school and homework, tweens (8- to 12-year-olds) spend almost six hours per day (5:55 hours) and teens (13- to 18-year-olds) spend almost nine hours per day (8:56 hours) using media, including watching TV, using the Internet, playing video games, using social media, and listening to music. 92% of teens report going online daily, mostly through the use of smartphones, and 24% of teens admit that they are online "almost constantly." Another study by the Pew Research Center in 2015 states 88% of teens use texting to connect with friends and more than half (55%) say they text their friends on a daily basis.

In contrast, just 25% of teens spend time with friends in person (outside of school) on a daily basis. That means text messaging — by a substantial margin — is the most popular choice for teens' daily communication. Most teens agree that losing their phone would be "disastrous to their social lives." 78% of teens check their devices "at least hourly" and the majority of our students sleep with their cell phones.

Cris Rowan, a pediatric occupational therapist, argues we should be less focused on *how* kids are using technology and more focused on *why* they are using it so much. The universal reason for teens spending so much time on technology seems to be to connect with others. "As children and parents are attaching more and more to technology, they're detaching from each other, and we know as a species we need to connect," Rowan said. "We're really pack animals. We need to be connected to other human beings. That's just a fact for any living organism; it doesn't do well when it's on its own."

In her book *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other*, Sherry Turkle summarizes what she believes happens when teens spend so much time in the digital world: "They become confused about companionship... digitized friendships—played out with emoticon emotions, so often predicated on rapid response rather than reflection... They come to accept lower expectations for connection."

After examining hundreds of articles, books, podcasts, videos, etc. about the impact of technology on society and our kids, four common themes emerged:

- It is actually changing their brains. Multiple studies prove that brains constantly interacting with all of this technology are being "rewired." Our students live in a world of constant distraction, and multi-tasking is the norm. Focus and attention are more difficult for many students. Stillness and reflection are often absent from their lives.

- It is changing their social skills - how they interact and communicate. They listen less and "broadcast" more. They are becoming less empathetic. Texting is a preferred method of communication for many because it offers an editable, controllable way to communicate.

- It is changing their creativity. Creative acts are more individualized and less group-focused.

- It is causing higher rates of anxiety and depression. As psychologist Robert Leahy points out: "The average high school kid today has the same level of anxiety as the average psychiatric patient in the early 1950s." In addition to the need to be constantly "plugged in," there is a growing reliance on texting and social media for community, which is no substitute for real human interaction.

Our music classes and rehearsals are a special time in our students' days where non-verbal communication and expression, real emotional connections, patience, and successful teamwork are all *required*. They learn to listen, to each other and themselves. Research conducted in schools has found that music offers a medium for personal expression, encourages tolerance and open-mindedness, and fosters an acceptance of differences. We all know these benefits. It is probably a big reason that we chose to be music teachers.

As we move forward, there must be more dialogue with our colleagues and our students about technology and its effects. This is a topic that is not going away; technology is only going to become *more* ubiquitous in all of our lives. Many music

educators and administrators are even seeking ways to get more technology in our classrooms and rehearsals. I believe our rehearsals and music classes must remain a safe environment that encourages human communication and expression without technological tools.

Give your students the opportunity to live *Across Crystal Lake Road* in your classroom and experience human interaction, real connection, and creativity with you and with each other. *Across Crystal Lake Road*, without smartphones, Apple TV, video games, and the Internet, we all can learn to breathe together, listen to one another, and create art together. From my experience, *Across Crystal Lake Road* is where we learn to actually... connect.

**Dr. Matthew Westgate** is the Director of Wind Studies at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

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# National Association *for* Music Education

#### **Diversity in School Music Performing Groups**

#### **Guest Article**

If there was ever a moment when the topic of diversity was more politicized and at the forefront, it is now. Our country, once referred to as a "melting pot" (post World War II) has since the latter part of the 20th century, become, "a salad bowl" of diverse cultures. Folks from other countries still see the "American dream" and long for their own slice. That being said, these same folks are often intensely proud of their background and cultural traditions (as well they should be). What is clear is that assimilation into today's American culture is much different than it was in the 1950s and 1960s.

When we were music educators in training we learned that music education and participation in school music is for all. Music: the "universal language;" you surely know that textbook definition. Yet, in recent times there have been some rumblings that perhaps we are not doing enough when it comes to embracing all children in order to achieve more diversity representation in school music groups. Some see this solely as a failure that we own. It is not. It is a failure of today's society.

I am not one for making excuses for our profession. However, I believe that the lion's share of finger pointing that has been done at our expense as music educators is terribly misdirected. It speaks to a bigger problem that we already as teachers, know all about. In no particular pecking order, I give you my own 4-point list of the main reasons that participation of a diverse student population in school music ensembles is sometimes very difficult to achieve (and, getting harder).

**1.** The movement to "standardize" and create a "one-size-fitsall" education for today's students (e.g., academic intervention services, forced remediation) curtails music participation by many students regardless of their background and abilities:

When the movement to standardize education across our country came into being during the last decade it signaled the beginning of draconian cuts to areas like music education in order to focus more attention on curricular areas considered "core" by the "experts" who argued that we needed to prioritize core areas, first. Music education was pushed to the "back burner" in many schools and suddenly, what had once been a well-balanced experience in music for many students (and, teachers) became a seemingly never-ending regimen of testing. Then, when students didn't perform up to the arbitrary level set by policy makers, many school music programs were sacked and pillaged. Schools with low reading and math scores were hit hard. In many circumstances, the students hardest hit were the very same students falling under the label of "diverse student population" (minorities, ESL students, and even students with special needs). Stories of how academic intervention in some schools prevents student involvement in their music program have been pervasive.

2. Lack of encouragement and support from the home:

A child is most certainly a product of their home environment and we know that all students come to school with a set of different views already predefined by their cultural background, beliefs, parent and sibling influence as well as other values that teachers in some cases, cannot easily change or modify. This sometimes presents a daunting challenge that music educators cannot easily meet. Add in peer pressure and social stigma and you have at times what can be an almost impossible task in achieving a balance of student diversity in the local music performing group program.

**3.** The media's fixation on highly paid athletes and the attention given to sports and the lack of coverage for the performing arts: It is tough to convince many students and their parents that participation in a musical performing group can offer the same level of individual attention and "team" experience that sports have to offer. Many societies (our own among them) extol and glorify participation in sports and athletes to heights well beyond those seen in the area of the music world (with the exception of a handful of music superstars). Despite the existence of countless well known and celebrated musicians hailing from diverse backgrounds, it is rare that many kids would idolize a great musician before they idolize a great athlete.

**4.** Comprehensive music programs must be available for all children, K-12 in all public schools, taught by a certified music educator. Local administrators and school boards need to know that there is an expectation and mandate for the scope and sequence of music instruction in our schools.

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If we are to encourage all children from diverse backgrounds to participate in school music performing groups we must insure that opportunities are made accessible in every school for kids to experience performing in band, chorus, orchestra or other emerging ensemble activity. We need to begin by recognizing the new national standards in music at the state level. School music programs must be restored with adequate staffing. State mandates and local school policy legislation is needed to compel our public schools to adhere to the promises and intent set forth in the ESSA passed in 2015.

So, there is no easy answer to the one we face as music educators when trying to explain why there isn't more of a diverse student representation in some of our performing groups. Not surprisingly, our nation today is struggling to explain how we will move forward in our attempts to embrace a diverse and growing population in our country.

Caution: be wary of those who point a finger at some individual or some group of individuals for failing to address the issue of diversity in our programs. This is a shared problem and we need to work together beginning at the very top with those who make policy, with the media, in the home and, in our communities to educate and illuminate the benefit of participating in school music for all children. Diversity is achievable but it requires a unified and ongoing effort.

Thomas N. Gellert is the Editor of the (New York) NYSSMA Journal The School Music News.

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#### Note from the Editor

#### Dale Misenhelter



I love the piece *Hallelujah*, having fallen hard for it some years ago when the Sondrio, Italy video version was making the rounds. It's the one with a nicely arranged and restrained performance by Alexandra Burke and the "free hugs" all around, filmed in the big Italian town square. If you haven't seen it, maybe do a quick search - you won't regret the 3 minute investment. Dramatic license, poetic interpretation, metaphorical creations and imagination ... all seem reasonable connections within the aesthetic zone in which we teach. Wandering art galleries, attending concerts, going to film festivals, etc., - it would be nice to think there's a recognized value and connection to real world experiences – from our classrooms to the lives of students and families. Major art museums in Europe often have an evening or two set aside for free admission, which in my experience and observation is taken huge advantage of by entire families. The Prado is packed on a Monday night.

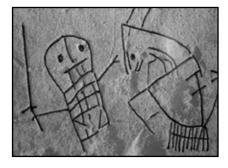
After the recent passing of Leonard Cohen, someone on a mailing list (an old school "listserv" for those of us of a certain age) posted a thoughtful interpretation of his Hallelujah verses. Their analysis suggests they have far better training and poetic instincts than my own, and apparently were well schooled in biblical allegory, too - also an area of ignorance for me. It's fascinating how uniquely and diversely we experience musical works. There's an infinite number of personalized versions of imagination we bring to the table, with endlessly experience-based, creative lines of interpretation. Since

we pin so much of our own curricular importance on this sort of "literacy" it seems all the more provocative to consider artistic insights and vocabulary as one very real dimension and metric for what we hope to accomplish.

#### What aesthetic encounters are kids accruing in their own life experiences?

I'm reminded of a funny moment in Intro to Music Ed this Fall where something being discussed prompted a near unanimous outcry to reference (specifically, for *ME* to reference) *School of Rock* as a touchstone of cultural relevance. Looking around that room it was abundantly clear I was the only one who didn't fully appreciate and embrace the artistic reality for this generation of Jack Black shredding with a group of 11 year olds. Hmm.

Regarding popular culture and films, the raw creativite inventiveness of the Pixar film *Inside Out* (in rather remarkable contrast to School of Rock) seems the gold standard for imagination, but has passed largely unnoticed among the students with whom I have contact... which leads me to ponder the origins of current threads of cultural relevance among our students. It's not a perfect analogous line of questioning, but todays culture is steeped, sometimes for better and sometimes not, in our shared film, TV, and youtube moments.



Wandering a museum myself this summer, a remarkable 12th century stone etching caught my eye and dropped my jaw, drawn by a child and depicting a small figure with a sword standing up to a dragon. What imagination (!) and patient determination. The notes accompanying it suggest it was painstakingly done by a young person who'd attended a medieval village pantomime of St. George and the Dragon, as evidenced by some fringe around the base of the dragon or "beast"

(suggesting a costume). That a child would ponder such detail as they carved it into the base of a column - at a childs height - an amazing artistic commentary (graffiti!) and reflective of what must have been a very memorable aesthetic experience.

We all have intimate little corners of the world we stake out, be it in pop musics, folk, jazz, going to the symphony, finding meaning in films etc. Yes, it worries me what aesthetic encounters kids today are accruing in their life experience, and certainly I worry about them coming out of my own classes, too. Apologies to Jack Black.

> Photo(s) use by permission, the Norfolk and Suffolk Medieval Graffiti Survey

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Special note: Vicki Lind deserves our thanks for her countless hours of work for ArkMEA these past few years. Her thoughtful responses to endless questions, and her real understanding of so many things the professional organization required of her did not go unnoticed or unappreciated. The organization is so very much stronger for her time and efforts.

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