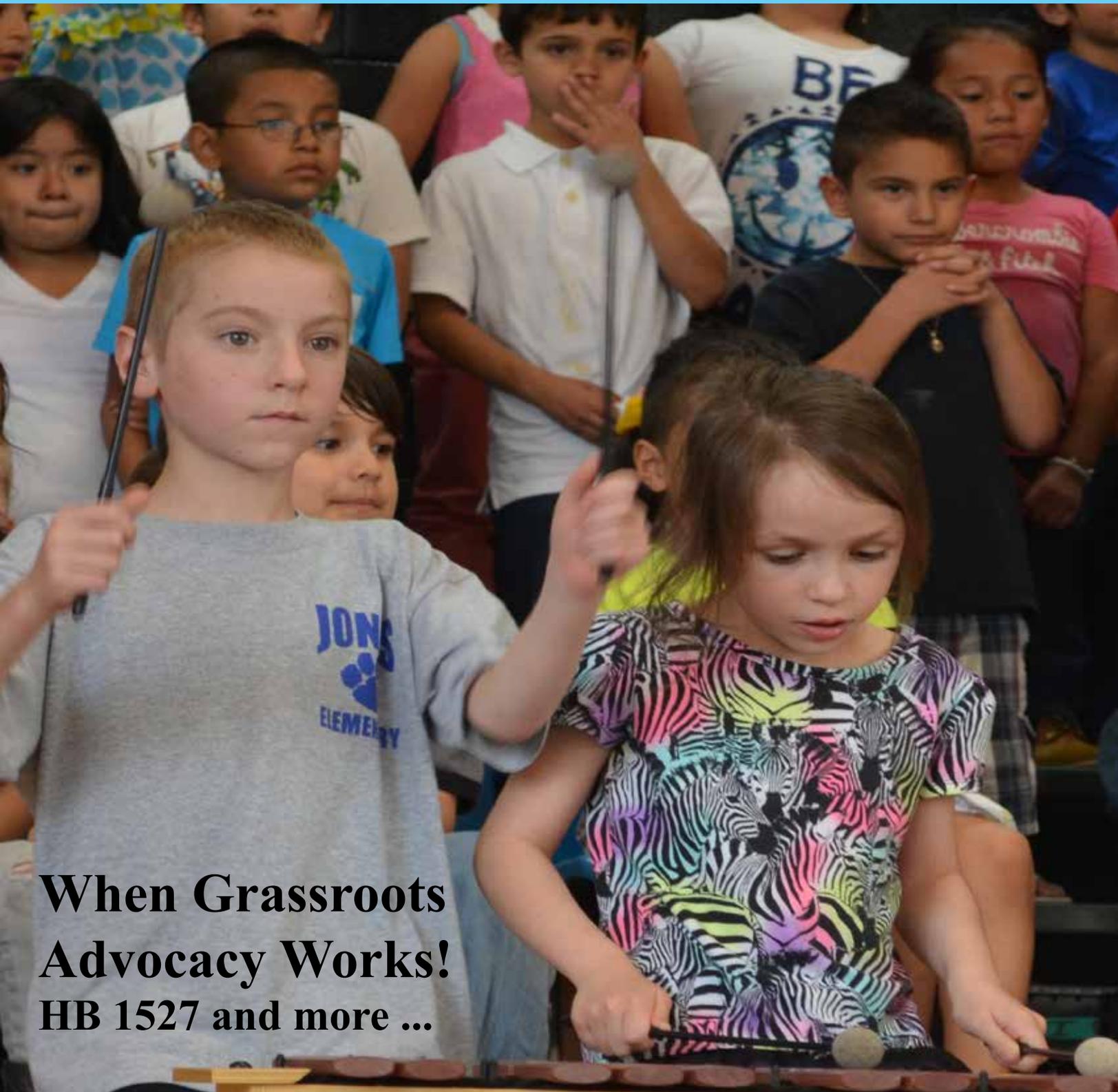


SEGUE

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE ARKANSAS MUSIC EDUCATORS ASSOCIATION
A FEDERATED STATE ASSOCIATION OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR MUSIC EDUCATION

Opus 36 Number 3

May 2015



**When Grassroots
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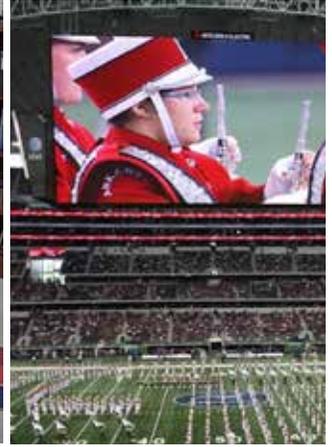


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Jones Elementary., (Springdale) students, Ashley Wright, Teacher

Arkansas Music Educators Association is
a federated state association of the
National Association for Music Education.
Segue is published three times each academic year in
September, February and May.

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Segue is published three times each academic year in
September, February and May.

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President's Note

By Vicki Lind

FROM STEM TO STEAM

As I recently sat in on the education committee meetings for the Arkansas Senate, I had time to reflect on why music education is so important to me. I attended the meetings armed with the research findings on the importance of music education and I was prepared to cite pertinent statistics supporting music in our schools. Yet, I knew these reasons alone were not what drives me to fight for strong arts programs. I've been a music teacher for most of my adult life and I am passionate about the role music plays in public education. I fervently believe in the power of education, and I believe in the power of the arts.

During the committee meetings, there was a great deal of talk about preparing our children for the future. Almost every person that spoke mentioned their commitment to education and their desire to meet the needs of every Arkansas child. There were many conversations about different programs and testing options as the senators looked for ways to teach and assess our students. I truly believe that every Senator in the room, and the concerned citizens in attendance, had a desire to enact policies that would strengthen our schools. Yet, the vision of what constitutes a strong school is not universally agreed upon and the policies being discussed seemed quite narrow and, in my opinion, lacked vision. It was clear that our legislators cared deeply about education, but it was also clear they didn't have all of the answers. I have to admit I don't have all of the answers either. I am, however, convinced that the relentless focus on STEM subjects and the current emphasis on standardized testing are both misguided. If we truly want to meet the needs of our students and prepare them to be future leaders, we must find ways

to support learning across a myriad of disciplines. We must find ways to support learning in the arts and humanities as well as science, technology, engineering and math.

I often think of my mother when I hear conversations about preparing our children for what lies ahead. My mother was born on a farm in Montana in 1927.

Her mother cooked on a wood stove and pumped water from a well using a hand pump. Mom arrived at her one-room schoolhouse on horseback. Over the years, the farm was updated with indoor plumbing, electricity, and phone service. During mom's lifetime, she witnessed the arrival of central heating and air-conditioning, the construction of a complex highway system, and the growth in the automotive industry. Mom has experienced a lot of changes in her 88 years and she is still going strong. She didn't have a class in technology, and she can't code worth a darn, but she uses her computer every day and she has adapted to a smart-phone with ease. She has been able to adapt to change because she has a flexible mind, she is able to think creatively, and she is able to draw upon a wealth of experiences to make important connections when trying to solve a problem. I think it is safe to say, her teachers never imagined the world she would live in. Likewise, we can't possibly imagine the world our students will experience.

The rhetoric in education over the past ten years has focused on "21st Century skills" with an emphasis on STEM subjects. Science, technology, engineering and math will most likely play an important role for future generations just as they have played an important role

in my mother's life, but I don't believe these subjects alone will provide a solid educational experience for our students. In a recent Washington Post article, author Fareed Zakaria described how our focus

A bill proposed by the Arkansas House of Representatives (HB 1527) contained language referencing a maximum number of minutes for Music, Art, and PE. Although not intended to negatively impact arts education, the wording of the bill could have had a devastating impact on elementary music programs across the state. I attended two meetings of the Senate Education Committee prepared to speak against the bill. However, as a result of hundreds of phone calls and emails to our legislators, the bill was amended and references to "maximum" limits were removed before it was brought forward for a vote.

on STEM has put us "on a dangerously narrow path" that will not meet the needs of future generations. As Zakaria pointed out, what is missing from the STEM initiative is the human element.

"America will not dominate the 21st century by making cheaper computer chips but instead by constantly reimagining how computers and other new technologies interact with human beings." That reimagining requires that we understand both the hard sciences and human nature. Zakaria credits a broad education with fostering critical thinking and creativity and producing a "synergy and cross-fertilization".

We don't know the problems the next generation will face any more than my mother's first grade teacher could anticipate Wi-Fi connection speeds, cellular data plans, or video-conferencing. Yet we do know that future leaders will need to be creative thinkers who can work collaboratively to solve new world problems and we want those leaders to exemplify the best of the human spirit. That's where the arts play such an important role. Through the arts, students develop in unique ways. They learn that being "right" isn't always enough and they learn that persistence pays off. They learn how to search for beauty in vibrant colors and diverse sounds, and they learn how beauty means different things to different people. They learn that creativity is often fostered by rigorous, disciplined work. As Elliot Eisner stated, "The arts teach children that problems can have more than one solution and that questions can have

more than one answer... The arts celebrate multiple perspectives. One of their large lessons is that there are many ways to see and interpret the world... The arts teach children that in complex forms of problem solving purposes are seldom fixed, but change with circumstance and opportunity... The arts make vivid the fact that neither words in their literal form nor numbers exhaust what we can know. The limits of our language do not define the limits of our cognition. The arts teach students that that small differences can have large effects..."

What our students do in the arts is not only important at school but is also connected to the world outside of education. Apple and Pixar are two examples of companies that have relied on both computer scientists and artists working together to pave new directions. Steve Jobs once commented that "it's in Apple's DNA that technology alone is not enough — that it's technology married with liberal arts, married with the humanities, that yields us the result that makes our hearts sing." We need innovative citizens who can think creatively and use science and technology in new ways. We need more great minds whose hearts sing when they have a great new idea or when they find unique solutions to old problems.

Chris Woodside, NAFME Assistant Executive Director, Center for Advocacy & Public Affairs, recently echoed my thoughts when writing about the ESEA Reauthorization act. "For the benefit of our children and our nation's future, we need schools to offer experiences that develop competencies in creating, performing, and responding. We need schools to foster creativity, which helps drive our economy. We need schools to instruct students in how to perform, both musically, and on the job. And we need schools to teach students how to respond to one another, their culture and the world around them. Music programs in our schools foster all of these skills, help to develop the complete individual and provide the balanced curriculum that students deserve.

The past few weeks have been a flurry of activity with letters, emails, and phone calls to senators requesting the language of Arkansas House Bill 1527 be clarified. Our Facebook post reached over 10,000 people and the senators mentioned hundreds of emails and phone calls during the senate education committee

meeting. As a result, the wording of the bill was clarified and the amendment removed references to "maximum" time allotments. It was gratifying to know that our voices were heard and that a grassroots effort can make a difference. Unfortunately, this is probably not the end of battle.

As I was putting the finishing touches on this article, I received an email update from NAFME regarding the current budget proposal in front of Congress. The newest proposal includes a 3.7 trillion cut in spending from non-defense discretionary funding over the next 10 years. This is the pool of money used for education, healthcare, care for veterans, and a host of other programs. We don't know what the final budget will look like, but we do know from past experience that arts programs often suffer when education spending is cut. As the debate on education continues, it is imperative that we add our voices to the mix. Taking a cue from the Rhode Island School for Design, we need to add a little STEAM (STEM plus the arts) to our schools. Rocco Landesman, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Arts, summed it up "When a school delivers the complete education to which every child is entitled — an education that very much includes the arts — the whole child blossoms." ArkMEA will continue to advocate for the whole child, lets continue working to make sure our schools blossom and the arts find their rightful place at the heart of education. Lets move the rhetoric from STEM to STEAM.

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Editors Notes Dale Misenhelter



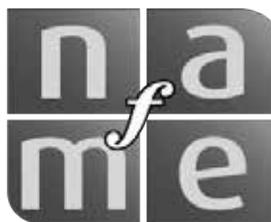
We all have favorite pieces we look forward to teaching. As anxious as I was to share the exquisite Orff arrangement about a child looking in the mirror and wondering who it was that was looking back, I failed to fully consider that

the setting was delicately but firmly rooted in the phrygian mode, and it left the class (university sophomores in fact) more than a little uneasy and tentative - to the point of borderline unsuccessful. They just weren't ready.

Readiness, as we consider it in our philosophical discussions in that same Intro class, can be a problem if used as an excuse not to teach. Rationalizing that not everybody is completely ready can be a reason to wait in perpetuity (a variation on the tongue-in-cheek textbook description of endlessly gettin' ready to get ready). The flip side, it would seem, might be that we really need to get started at some point, and sooner, with some obvious concern for good fit, is better. *Simply put, the sooner we start, the sooner they'll understand.*

In fact, it's hard to think of a musical situation where that doesn't apply. Young ones deserve the earliest possible opportunity of exploring the Orff instrumentarium, and learning self control with mallets. Finding their way around those keyboards, and discovering that hitting the wrong bar from time to time doesn't cause classroom collapse disorder, nor bring forth a torrent of confrontational corrections. Third graders making up a first small solo that simply fits within the requisite number of beats is a necessary "sooner is better" experience.

A little older, and perhaps it's time to recognize that a casual (not necessarily synonymous with less-than-serious) performance just for each other is a meaningful and memorable experience – no formal setting and audience required. Early introduction to the need for trying our own simple arrangements and writing something down to remember them in some fashion is a necessary early step in discovering the value of notation. Working with others on those arrangements is what we in music offer so very uniquely, and far sooner than almost any other subject.



A little older still, and we can discuss the unique expectations, biases, and odd contrivances of the adjudication experience. Seemingly the polar opposite, there's being given a first opportunity with structure and guidance to work with their own arrangements of music the older students really know - popular artist pieces, cover tunes, etc., which really can be a reality for kids enabled with skills acquired in band or choir. Performing their arrangements for each other is an extraordinary opportunity – both social and musical - and a first step into finding the value in music that's perceived as relevant in their own lives. It also serves to explore curiosity and creativity.

Sooner being better isn't limited to the kids. The earlier we start communicating to parents the inherent value in the initiative and cooperation of students creating things while working together, the sooner they will genuinely understand and take a sincere and active interest in supporting the music classes. The sooner we share evaluative results of (for example) musical aptitude procedures (like the various Measures of Musical Audiation, for instance) with colleagues and principals, the sooner they recognize that we're serious (too), that we also understand long-term assessments, and are participating in a substantive context rather than just waiting for their happenstance response to yet another program or concert. Kind comments are always appreciated; reaching a deeper level of understanding and appreciation can (also) happen, but probably won't anytime soon unless you help them understand.

The best evidence is found with the kids. Improvising. Arranging. Dancing. Performing with and for each other. These aren't activities or concepts that will miraculously start to happen at some indeterminate point when students become magically ready, any more than being comfortable playing in the phrygian mode or enjoying (!) the regular experience of reading a new piece in band or choir.

A recent visit to a band room, and at the top of the compelling list of announcements on the board is a reminder for everyone that it is 2 days before the big contest. Several teachers are present, attending to the group with their most serious faces on. "Today we're learning to sight-read" I am told. Stopwatches are running, the kids faces are strained, and you could have heard the proverbial pin drop. I'm sure they'll do their best, and as I leave the school I smile and nod my head knowingly, remembering the passion, desire, and energy required for working with young bands. I also know there may well be some nervousness and disappointments, born of unfamiliarity and lack of experience with simply routinely reading some new music. Like my own classroom struggles in phrygian, perhaps starting sooner would have been better.



Education Week's Curriculum Matters Blog – April 8, 2015 – *“Definition of ‘Core Subjects’ Expanded under Senate Bipartisan NCLB Rewrite”*

National Association for Music Education Press Release – April 7, 2015 – *“A New Day for Music Education that Ensures ‘Every Child Achieves’”*

When confronted about the language of the bill, Rep. Bill Gossage, from Ozark, responded that “there was a lot of misunderstanding about what the bill did.” Nevertheless, he added an amendment that eliminated the maximum time allowed. Obviously, many of you responded to our notices on the ArkMEA Facebook

These are historic headlines for music education.

The headlines refer to the fact that the definition of “core subjects” was changed for the first time to include music. According to NAFME the effort was spearheaded by a grassroots campaign resulting in over 10,000 letters being generated requesting such a change.

Unfortunately, these only refer to a bi-partisan U.S. Senate proposal to change the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) currently referred to as “The No Child Left Behind Act.” At the time of this writing, the Senate and House have yet to reach a compromise on a new ESEA. Of course, an effort is currently underway by arts advocacy organizations to ensure the language remains intact. It’s gratifying to know that we can act together on a national level. Perhaps this has implications for arts educators in Arkansas.

During the previous state legislative session Title 6-16-130 (Arkansas Code requiring every public elementary school in the state to provide instruction in visual art or music) was once again assailed. Certainly there are problems with that law, and it needs to be fixed. However, House Bill 1527 (now Act 1079 of 2015) was not the needed change. Its intent was to provide flexibility to school districts in scheduling art, music, and physical education – a most worthy goal in my opinion. The problem was that the language of the bill did more than that. The language would have required elementary schools to limit the amount of contact time per week to only 60 minutes. In most schools that would have been a blessing because they only managed to meet with students 40 minutes per week. However, quite a few districts have allowed their music classes to meet more than the minimum requirement. This bill would have eliminated that possibility.

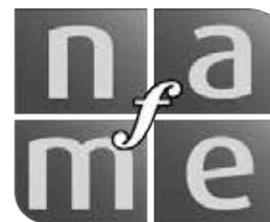
page. There was even a plea from one lawmaker to stop the emails. Thanks to those who did respond.

We need to learn from our national organization. Coordination between arts organizations has helped us at the national level. If the ESEA has not yet been passed, you can still be a participant on the national stage. Write your U.S. Senator or Representative and let them know that you want music listed as a core subject in whatever version of the ESEA becomes law. In addition, you still need to be prepared each state legislative session to offer a fix for Title 6-16-130. The limits set by Act 1506 in 2001 continue to be a problem to this day. During the 2013 General Assembly, when the law was once again challenged, several of us worked on a suggested change to the law that included scheduling corrections and teacher-student ratios.

I sincerely hope all arts organizations will be able to get together one day to create and work for new legislation that will correct those errors. If those changes are to be made, you will need to do it as a coalition of arts groups. You can’t afford to just wait until the bill is challenged every two years. By then no legislator wants to make the kind of changes that are required.

That would have been the correct solution back in 2001 when only one organization was involved in making law (it was not us). ArkMEA needs to be in the vanguard of such an effort. Perhaps it’s time to get the Arkansas Arts Educators Consortium active.

We need to learn from our national organization. Coordination between arts organizations has helped us at the national level.



A Year in the Life and a Lifetime of Music: the George Junior High Band

By Paige Rose Guest Article

The George Junior High School Bands have been “cultivating grit and stoutheadedness” in northwest Arkansas. Directors Mike Echols and Chris Moore

have instilled in their students these keywords to success, which not only pervade music performance, but also life. George Junior High exists in a high poverty area, and many families do not speak fluent English; however, this school with a population of 600 students has 520 students who choose to be in music offerings. It seems the barriers that normally deter and

discourage most teachers have simply served as motivation and inspiration for the band program. By demonstrating their own work ethic and a “can-do” attitude with students, Echols and Moore have created an ideal environment for student learning. The music education in class is supplemented by family outreach and student encouragement that take place outside of class.

Students see their teachers making house visits and talk to their families about music. Many have instruments only because their directors have bought used instruments using their personal credit cards, completed the necessary repairs, and allowed families buy them at no interest. Students see their teachers at school before 7:00 and until late at night, ready to practice and devote attention to sectionals and individual instruction. Directors provide transportation for students and often drive buses and trucks to the many band events. There are continuous motivational pictures, videos, social media posts, and merchandise provided to students. Every concert program and presentation portrays the importance of students and if you’ve seen them perform, you can hear the results of this multi-faceted and successful approach.

Echols and Moore, along with Janice Bengtson, have been sharing their knowledge with others. In the spring of 2014, they presented “How to Make

Your March Sound Great!” at the ArkMEA portion of the Arkansas All State Convention. This session ended a day-long workshop on composition and arranging, and forged a great connection between the George program and many attendees. These same directors have also traveled

to universities to speak to music education majors about motivating and teaching students. Echols, Moore, and Bengtson once drove a roundtrip total of six hours after school to present; they even brought the college students refreshments.

This example of grit and stoutheadedness has become a unique call for these teachers to share: they presented “Closing the Achievement Gap” at the 2014 Arkansas Bandmasters Association in the summer of 2014. The academic year then began with the George Band performing for over 2000 educators and administrators at the Springdale Public Schools Back-2-School Event. National recognition of their presentations followed, as Echols, Moore, and Bengtson presented “Building Band Under High Poverty Disadvantages” at the National Association for Music Education In-Service Conference in Nashville, TN in October. All of this occurred while preparing for their performance at the Midwest Band and Orchestra Clinic.



The announcement of George Junior High’s selection had been met with much fanfare, as the Midwest Clinic tweeted that, “George Junior High Symphonic Band will be the FIRST junior high band from Arkansas at Midwest Clinic – Congrats!” Over the next few months, students, parents, and directors worked tirelessly on music, travel arrangements, fundraising, and organizing this trip. Instrumental to these efforts and many other events were the GJHS principal, Don Hoover and Springdale superintendent, Dr. Jim Rollins, who shared at the back to school night that he, “would have driven 10,000 miles to hear the George Band play. George bandmen cultivate true grit by igniting a yearning and passion for music.”

With the December date approaching, George Band and its directors made the trip to Hot Springs for the 2014 ArkMEA Conference. ArkMEA had been planning to make GJHS the featured performers of the 2014 conference previously, and the timing of the two events proved advantageous for everyone. For educators around the state, this was the chance to

hear the Midwest performance without leaving Arkansas, and for the directors and students, this was a very early dress rehearsal in front of music educators.

The George students entered the opening session of the conference in uniform dress and uniformity

of perfect behavior. Unbeknownst to them, they were presented with the 2nd Annual ArkMEA “Advocate of Note Award” for their music performances and advocacy throughout the entire year. Another surprise surfaced shortly after as they witnessed their director Mike Echols become a member of the ArkMEA Hall of Fame. The George Symphonic Band performed their Midwest preview as the



featured concert later in the day, and it met with rave reviews. Students and directors then launched a well-attended lecture demonstration session on *Empowering Student Musicianship and Creativity*. The ArkMEA board, impressed with the support behind the George Band also chose to give their “Administrator of the Year Award” to principal Don Hoover and superintendent. Dr. Jim Rollins. Hoover, who was the Arkansas Principal of the Year, has stated, “Music is a pillar of our school. As a young school establishing traditions, music provided opportunities to build foundations for success. Our music programs inspired and synergized an astonishing self-confidence and self-gratification in our students. Music has become a cornerstone for our community.”

The Midwest Clinic was the trip of a lifetime for the George Band program. Stopping in Springfield, Missouri to perform, the directors mixed learning experiences and life experiences. Students also visited the St. Louis Arch and some Chicago points of interest. Guest conductors Russell Robinson and W. Dale Warren also spent podium time with the band,



2014 was a banner year of performances and presentations for the George Band; however, when you read the reflections of the George students, the future promises to be even brighter.

“When ever I am playing my instrument

with the George band, I feel like I am beyond home. I feel like I travel to different wonderful places that always fill up my spirit every single day.”

-- Tiffany, Clarinet, 8th grade.

“Band is the place where I found a family, but I also found myself. Band is the place where

I can find a new perspective on the world, where I can find hope and express myself when words fail. Band is so much more than playing the right notes and right rhythms or even the right dynamic changes at the right times, it’s a time to take the masks off the world and tell your story.” -- Shelby, Saxophone, 9th grade.



who performed their polished program to a packed house. The George band garnered rave reviews and the respect and admiration of professionals who were at this historic concert.

The most telling stories of success come from the George students. With their words, the students never “toot their

own horn,” but instead offer the maturity of seasoned musicians and the hope and wonder of children. When they speak, they speak of the music, the performances, and the people. Grit and stoutheartedness have a way of inspiring students to understand what lasts forever, even after the awards are given and the years have passed.

“Music is not just a meaningless 5-letter word with a couple of definitions on it. Music isn’t just black dots with sticks coming out of it. Music is beautiful, passionate sounds that ring a source of freedom in our ears and smiles to our faces. Music is a spectrum of colors that gave us our source of light and hope in our lives. Music is an escape away from the darkest reality. Music is a sense of purpose added for us to fulfill in our lives to the fullest. Music is the unfathomably beautiful in our nature as a power of symbolism and a form of expression. Music is something that exists out in another dimension. Those who found it, find it quite beautiful to breath in.”

-- Fah, French Horn, 9th grade.

“We are the young musicians with the grit, perseverance, and soul it takes to handle anything. As we play together we grow stronger in confidence and as a family.” Madison, Trombone, 8th grade.

“Music has been injected into my veins , it is something I am no longer capable of surviving with out.”

-- Angel, Euphonium, 9th grade.

“The George Symphonic Band is already like a family I’ve never had, and we’ve been together for only a few months. We all have the passion or desire in music to express ourselves. It has been for me when no one has and became a part of my life and is my life just like the other band members. If I didn’t have music in my life in the form of the George Band, I don’t know how I could’ve made it through my junior high years on a social aspect.”

-- Kaylee, Oboe, 8th grade.

“The George Band has affected me an my peers in the most positive light and I couldn’t have asked for better people and opportunities. I know even as young as I am that the George band and the experiences acquired through it are ones that I will remember and that will follow me for the rest of my life. Opportunities like Midwest are so rare; it makes me overjoyed that I’m able to participate.”

-- Kali, Clarinet, 9th grade.

Paige Rose is Immediate Past President of ArkMEA

How to improve attention and promote better self-regulation in the music classroom

Michelle and Michael are 10th grade trumpet players in Ms. Fry's high school band. It is 3:00 pm on a Friday afternoon and both students are tired after a long week of classes, homework, and after school rehearsals. As Ms. Fry tries rehearsing the last few measures of the show case piece for next week's concert, an interesting but not uncommon situation unfolds.

"Trumpets, we are still cutting off the end of the phrase at measure 82. Please make sure to subdivide that last dotted quarter and release together." Michelle thinks about Ms. Fry's directions and then proceeds to quietly subdivide the measure in question. She is diligent in her attempts, and although students around her are fidgeting, whispering, or otherwise tuning out, her ability to focus through distractions helps her learn the passage after just a few tries. In contrast, Michael is struggling. Despite his best efforts, he is fidgeting, playing games with the iPhone hidden on his stand, and is having trouble following and remembering Ms. Fry's directions. To make things worse, he notices his friend entering the band room just a few minutes before the bell. Before he has a chance to think about it, he is already yelling, "wait for me ...".

Ask any music teacher and they will undoubtedly tell you that they have worked with both a "Michelle" and "Michael" at some point in their career. They might even confess a little confusion as to why, under identical situations, one student would react completely different when compared to the other. Often, these same teachers are well trained in classroom management, have exemplary groups, and think carefully about how they structure learning

environments for their students. Yet, dealing with discrepancies in focus and self-regulation, which can be significant hindrances to successful learning, continue to be a major concern for them.

Part of the issue in addressing problems with focus and self-regulation is that many educators lack familiarity with how these faculties

Key relationships between attention, self-regulation, and successful learning are subtle and complex, and new ways of thinking have emerged that offer greater clarity in respect to these ...

function within the brain. Although teachers are often trained to work with the observable, i.e. desirable or undesirable "behaviors", they have little knowledge regarding the biological and neurological underpinnings of these behaviors. Key relationships between attention, self-regulation, and successful learning are subtle and complex, and new ways of thinking have emerged that offer greater clarity in respect to these relationships.

One specific research finding provides evidence that attention is subject to modification through deliberate practice. This is important because it is often taken for granted that attentional skills, such as prolonged states of undistracted and voluntary focus, are either at the mercy of environmental influences, or otherwise biologically fixed. In fact, recent studies indicate that strategies based on a practice known as "mindfulness" are especially useful

in enhancing attention and self-regulation.

In its most basic form, mindfulness may be described as a cognitive strategy that pairs goal-directed attention with a skillful and non-reactive orientation to distracting thoughts, emotions, or other undesirable cognitions. Mindfulness as used in modern therapeutic,

scientific, and educational contexts has allowed institutions such as schools and hospitals to explore how mindfulness might benefit their communities.

Mindfulness-based techniques seem especially relevant to music learning because their basic protocols are adaptable in a number of musically related exercises, offering an effective yet non-punitive method of improving attention among students. As a teacher, I became interested in mindfulness after years of using it in my own work as a performer and conductor. I noticed that with appropriate modifications, mindfulness-type strategies could be incorporated into warm-ups and other activities in my classroom. The key was to make them relatively short, and to relate them to a musical concept or skill. After years of working on and refining these activities, I feel that they have been incredibly useful in my work as a teacher.

What is mindfulness?

The basic practice of mindfulness can be described as paying attention to the present moment, on purpose, with a sense of openness and curiosity. Typical mindfulness-based exercises require participants to focus their awareness on somatic sensations, thoughts, or other experiences, without any attempt to block or otherwise suppress associations that might arise during this process. When these types of associations do arise, practitioners are directed to simply acknowledge them then re-engage with the object of their attention. With its implications for self-regulation, the use of mindfulness-based techniques by classroom teachers may result in several benefits in student behavior, focus, and meaningful engagement.

How does Mindfulness Work?

Although the science behind mindfulness is complex, its effects on the brain can be conceptualized in a simple manner. Basically, mindfulness refines parts of the brain that deal with attention and self-regulation. Your attention system, which has three distinct but overlapping functions, is used extensively during musical activities. These functions can be described as focus, awareness, and orienting, and are mapped to different parts of the brain. Focus deals with your ability to sustain attention without distraction, which is important for activities such as tuning to a pitch or working intensely on a difficult passage. Awareness is what you use when you are monitoring your environment for important information, and is in play when we engage in activities such as blending, matching, or responding quickly to a cue from a conductor. Finally, there is orienting, which deals with your ability to change quickly and purposefully between different types of tasks. Self-regulation, which

is related to our ability to plan intelligently and persevere through difficult tasks, improves greatly when these attentional capacities are refined.

Techniques in the Classroom

Musical activities, specifically those dealing with psychomotor and listening skills, are especially conducive to promoting mindfulness. Since mindfulness-based strategies involve a basic protocol of guided attention paired with prompts to (re)engage when presented with distractions, these fundamental procedures can be adapted into musical warm-ups, listening tasks, and somatic awareness tasks. Creative music teachers can incorporate these activities in a number of ways, but in Exercises 1-4, I offer suggestions that include a basic preparatory protocol, followed by examples of specific exercises that can be used within instrumental, choral, and general music classes. Furthermore, specific musical, attentional, and self-regulation benefits for each exercise are included in Table 1, along with a suggested mindfulness prompt to accompany each of the exercises.

Adaptations to these exercises are potentially limitless, and can range from a few minutes to longer sessions based on context and time availability. Ideally, there would be some mindfulness-type exercise occurring on a regular basis, as the research literature suggests that short exercises that occur regularly are most useful in promoting long term changes to a student's ability to focus and self-regulate. Even short periods of mindfulness, however, have been shown to be beneficial.

When you practice mindfulness-based strategies, you are essentially practicing a skill. Specifically, this is the skill of strengthening your attention system so that it serves you rather than the other way around. You learn to do this skillfully and

realistically, knowing that there are limitations to attention, and that working with distractions and unwanted emotions rather than against them is the key. This is the essence of what it means to self-regulate.

It is important to note that using mindfulness techniques might not directly affect the quality of a student's task performance or ability to learn. In other words, good teaching is still required. Good teaching, however, is greatly facilitated when students are less distracted, have increased skills in cognitive and emotional self-regulation, and are primed to be active, aware, and engaged during learning tasks. There is also research suggesting that mindfulness-based strategies can lead to more engaged listening, increased enjoyment of musical tasks, and might even facilitate states of focused enjoyment known as "flow." In one study, musicians who participated in a brief mindfulness induction before listening to operatic music reported increased engagement and less distractibility during listening. The same study demonstrated that listeners experienced longer periods of concentrated enjoyment, or flow, after engaging in a brief mindfulness induction.

For music educators, the use of mindfulness-based approaches is limited only by their willingness and creativity. In fact, there are now several organizations, publications, and conferences dedicated to using mindfulness in the classroom. These resources can serve as a clearinghouse of ideas for music teachers looking to enhance how students learn and stay engaged within their classrooms. Furthermore, in an age where opportunities for distraction and instant gratification are increasing at a rapid pace, developing skills in concentration and control can only help enhance our students' well-being and opportunities for success.

(CONTINUED, pg 18)

Good Music, and the Lessons of Lego

A few years ago, motivational guru Simon Sinek told us “It doesn’t matter what you do, it matters why you do it. Start with why.” I’m going to follow his advice and tell you why I teach and interact with groups the way that I do.

Because playing good music well is not enough.

Please understand: I’m not suggesting that we should play lousy music badly. What I’m suggesting is that if ‘why’ ends at playing good music well we’re stopping far short of what the arts bring to the human condition. Let’s look at it another way – and bear with me, this will make sense in a minute. I suspect virtually everybody is familiar with Lego. Little, colorful plastic interlocking bricks. They have been around since 1959. Here are a few statistics to pique your curiosity:

- Lego Corporation manufactured 55 billion pieces last year alone.
- 10 Lego construction sets are sold every second
- It’s estimated that kids spend 5 billion hours a year playing with them.
- Enough Lego bricks exist for everyone on the planet to have 80 of their own.

How is it that we can spend so much time playing with these little bricks? Well, 3 of the 8-dot pieces of the same color can be combined in more than 1,000 ways. Make that 6 bricks of the same color, and there are more than 915 million possible combinations.

Amazing as all that is, just 10 years ago the company was losing 1 million dollars a day. Yet in 2014 they are now the most profitable toy maker in the world. The story of this astounding turn-around is the stuff of legend in the business community. It’s also the allegory behind *The Lego Movie*.

If you haven’t seen *The Lego Movie*, here’s a mash-up of various synopses:

The film follows Emmet, an ordinary, rules-following, perfectly average Lego minifigure who is mistakenly identified as the most extraordinary person – the key to saving the world – *The Special*. He falls, literally, into a creative and

diverse fellowship of strangers known as the Master Builders. Their epic quest is to defeat the evil tyrant Lord Business who is bent on gluing all the pieces of the Lego universe in place permanently

advocacy could dig them out of the hole they were in.

So how did they turn it around? First they hired a new CEO (only the fourth in the company’s history and the first from outside the founding family). Then they set about figuring out what Lego was uniquely about. They didn’t worry about

No amount of advocacy could dig them out of the hole they were in.

according to the manufacturer’s instructions – *no deviations allowed.*

Lord Business was what the Lego Corporation had become in its first 40 years. Rule oriented and very protective of the prepackaged building sets. Their philosophy was: just make what’s pictured on the box, then buy another set and make that - a classic modeling mentality. Make it, put it on a shelf, make another. They were not at all comfortable with free play, mixing and matching sets (quite ironically, since the genius of the product is that any piece interlocks with any other). And they turned their backs on the peculiar flights of fancy created routinely by their customers.

The word ‘Lego’ is a contraction of two Danish words meaning “play well”. To play well in the eyes of the old Lego Corporation was to leave the creativity to the manufacturer. They would think of what to do with the bricks, and you would follow their instructions. The company ‘why’ was: because we said so. Because it’s always been done that way. Trust us.

That’s a lot like what happens in most middle and high school music classrooms. The composers create the music, the publishers package it, and the teacher supplies the instructions. The students are expected – indeed rewarded for – doing exactly and only what they’re told to do. “Here’s some good music (trust me).

Decode it correctly, play it well, and the concert will be a success.” It’s a classic modeling approach: play *Air for Band*, earn a superior rating, then put it on a shelf and move on. Mission accomplished. Then what?

That’s where Lego was 10 years ago, people doing exactly what the company felt they should - and losing 1 million dollars a day. Building good models well wasn’t enough. *And no amount of*

attracting new customers (what we’d call advocacy and growing the program enrollment), but instead focused on serving their core customers better.

They removed limitations. Sure, they still print instructions but if you have the imagination for something different they’ll support you. The new Lego Factory online lets you design your own model and then purchase the bricks you need. If the brick you need doesn’t exist, draw it and Lego will make it for you. They now sponsor Brick Fests to celebrate the amazing and weird stuff built by Lego enthusiasts, and they began to deliberately recruit and hire Lego fans as employees.

They threw away the glue, sent Lord Business packing, and started encouraging and supplying the Master Builders. They figured out that what was important wasn’t the product, but what the product enabled people to do. To that end, they crafted a new mission statement and corporate purpose:

To inspire and develop the builders of tomorrow. Our ultimate purpose is to inspire and develop children to think creatively, reason systematically and release their potential to shape their own future – experiencing the endless human possibility.

That’s a long way from “sit still and follow the instructions.” Why is playing good music well not enough? Because it stops short of experiencing the endless human possibility, or even acknowledging that such possibility exists.

In music classrooms across North America we were taught, and have taught our students, to be Emmetts. Remember that throughout most of movie, Emmet is perfectly happy with his mundane existence in Bricksburg and

he is extremely uncomfortable – even panicked – when he finds himself without a set of instructions to follow. Go into any school or university and ask an ensemble to form and express a musical point of view and they won't know what to do. I've tried it. If you want to see them panic, ask them to work without notation, or to improvise.

It's just like Emmett. When faced with the challenge of creating something to save the world the best he can come up with is a double-decker couch. He reverts to what is familiar, practical, measurable, and easily explainable to anyone who might ask him what it is (like an administrator, or the school board, or a parent). His has no experience with the possibility of 915 million combinations, so his idea is...a couch. It's not that he isn't creative. It's that his creativity has been deliberately limited, put inside a box with a set of instructions.

We need to begin to see the possibilities within our medium, to realize that with the same materials we can build a couch, or a spaceship, or the CN Tower, or a life-sized bust of William Shatner (inside Lego joke - look it up). We need to view the music curriculum as the development of Master Builders, not the indoctrination of more Emmetts.

If you're thinking: "That sounds great. But how do we do it?" you've taken the critical and necessary first step. You've accepted and embraced WHY and moved to HOW. How do you help Emmett imagine more than a couch? How do you let go of the fear that comes from working without instructions to unlock your inner Master Builder?

Because playing good music well is not enough

instrumental, general, elementary, secondary, post-secondary, employed, hoping to be employed...we are all potential Master Builders.

Let's dedicate ourselves to developing and sharing the answers to those questions in collaboration with anyone who is interested, at whatever level you teach. Choral,

Carolyn Barber is Director of Bands at the University of Nebraska in Lincoln, Nebraska.

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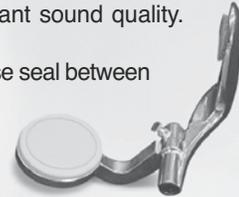
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Mindfulness Exercises (Diaz, continued from pg 13)

Exercise 1

Preparatory Protocol for All Exercises

- (1) Ask students to close their eyes, sit comfortably, and take a few deep breaths. Prompt them to *allow* their breathing to become normal and relaxed, rather than purposefully changing their breath or *actively* trying to relax.
- (2) Tell students to pretend that there is a string on the top of their head that is gently pulling them towards the ceiling. They should feel their upper body become a little taller, supported by a gentle lifting in the area of their spine.
- (3) As their breathing becomes slower and relaxed, ask students to move their upper bodies left to right and side-to-side until they find a position in which they feel balanced, alert, and relaxed.
- (4) For all exercises, remember the goal is to focus attention on a task or goal while prompting students to *acknowledge* distractions rather than suppress them or over-react to them. This is done through gentle reminders to re-attend to the task at hand, rather than ruminate on distracting thoughts or other sources of competition for focus of attention.

Exercise 2: “Focused breathing”

- Musical goal:* Breath control for sustained phrasing, builds focus for contexts in which musicians must maintain focus on a target despite distractions (for example, tuning, delaying gratification during complex learning tasks)
- Set up:* In instrumental ensembles, students should put their instruments on their laps and both feet on the ground (if sitting).
- (1) Students should then place their index finger approximately two inches from their chin, making sure their middle knuckle is directly across their lips.
 - (2) When the knuckle is in place, the teacher should lead them through measured inhalation/exhalations (4-4, 3-6, 2-8, etc.), reminding students that the goal is not only to work on breath control, but on focus as well. This can be done by gently prompting students to attend completely to the physical sensations of air rushing in and out from their lips to the knuckle, while acknowledging distractions and then returning their focus to the breath.
- Mindfulness Prompt:* “Focus on the sensation of air moving across your lips and on to your knuckle, if you become distracted by any sounds or thoughts, simply acknowledge the distraction and bring your attention back to the breath.”

Exercise 3: “Find the Pitch”

- Musical goal:* Error detection and listening across the ensemble
- Setup:* This exercise will require teachers to purposefully identify pitches and notes within vertical sonorities as targets for listening, or to identify students or sections to assist in purposefully playing incorrect notes within a melody or vertical sonority.
- Procedure:*
- (1) Select a target pitch nested within a warm-up exercise or from selected repertoire. For example, the third of a Bb major triad, which will be played by a specific instrument or section during or at the end of a passage
 - (2) Prompt the group to listen carefully for the occurrence of the target pitch, and to be prepared to identify which section/player performed it, and for added difficulty - when, how many times, at what dynamic, etc. As always, start with easy and progress to more varied and difficult tasks as students improve. Students with the target note must be notified in advance that they should not raise their hand or provide an answer during this time. To keep students on their toes, make sure everyone has an equal chance of being selected.
 - (3) Variations of this exercise can be developed for identifying *incorrect* pitches, vertical harmonies, or other musical elements.
- Mindfulness Prompt:* “While performing your part, listen carefully across the ensemble. See if you can detect which instrument has the target note. If you become too focused on your own part, or become distracted, mentally acknowledge this and then reengage with finding the target.”

Mindfulness Applications (Diaz, continued)

Table 1
Musical and Self-Regulation Benefits of Sample Exercises

	Band	Instrumental/Choral	Instr/Choral/General
Musical Domain and Concept	<i>Psychomotor</i> “Breathing”	<i>Cognitive/Psychomotor/Affective</i> “Adjust to your partner”	<i>Cognitive</i> “Find the pitch”
Focus of Attention	Measured inhalation and exhalation aimed at the knuckle (see Figure 2). Develops <i>goal-directed</i> attention	Individual along with a partner’s performance of a musical element (see Figure 3). Develops <i>orienting</i> attention	Target pitch within a chord performed by a specific instrument or section. Deviations from a target vertical sonority (see Figure 4). Develops appropriate <i>stimulus-driven</i> attention
Self-Regulation Benefit	Ability to focus on a target/goal while dealing skillfully with distractions	Purposeful and rapid shifting between two tasks. Dealing quickly and effectively with frustration. Decreases unnecessary rumination on mistakes.	Awareness and sensitivity to important environmental cues
Musical Context	Sustaining breathing through a difficult phrase, sustaining a target pitch, tempo, or focus on a specific musical element	Monitoring and quick adjustment shifts between individual and ensemble performance of musical elements such as articulation, intonation, or blend. Following a conductor.	Active ensemble listening, error detection, decreases excessive focus on students’ individual part, encourages ensemble engagement and sensitivity

Frank M. Diaz, “Mindfulness, Attention, and Flow during Music Listening: An Empirical Investigation,” *Psychology of Music* (2011): 1, doi: 10.1177/0305735611415144

Jeffrey M. Greeson, “Mindfulness Research Update: 2008,” *Health Practice Review* 14 (2009): 11-15.

Lutz Antoine, Heleen A. Slagter, Adrian J. Dunn, and Richard J. Davidson, “Attention Regulation and Monitoring in Meditation,” *Trends in Cognitive Science* 12 (2008): 163.

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Meeting the Standards: Listening in Orchestra

Many music teachers with secondary performance ensembles incorporate music listening experiences into rehearsals. Sometimes the purpose is to support the learning of concert music by playing a recording or showing a video of a fine performance of the music being rehearsed. Listening can also be motivational; a young string bass player seeing or hearing Edgar Meyer perform can aspire to that level of excellence some day. And, at other times, listening can simply be fun, as a break in the rehearsal routine.

Academic Standards in the Arts

Academic Standards in the Arts (for Minnesota, 2008) include listening within the four strands that foster the development of students' artistic literacy. The strands are as follows:

1. Artistic Foundations
2. Artistic Process: Create or Make
3. Artistic Process: Perform or Present
4. Artistic Process: Respond or Critique

Friday Surprise

Standards can sound like serious business. Under Artistic Foundations, middle school music students are to "analyze the elements of music including melody, rhythm, harmony, dynamics, tone color, texture, form and their related concepts."

Many years ago, a teacher writing in the MENC Music Educators Journal introduced all of these concepts by way of short listening examples he called "Friday Surprise." Each week he presented a different piece, some orchestral and others for solo instruments, that represented different eras and styles. Students wrote observations using musical terms they knew or other descriptive word and phrases. Students came to look forward to the "surprise" each week, and in Minnesota, this activity would meet the first strand – Artistic Foundations.

Senior Music Listening Presentations

In my high school orchestra classes, I have used a variation on the idea of the Friday Surprise. Each orchestra senior at Blaine plans a 12-15 minute "Senior Music Listening Presentation" in which

they begin with a piece from the loosely defined "orchestra world." This world can include film scores, video game music, and alternative styles for strings, in addition to standard orchestral and solo repertoire. For the remainder of the time, students can present music from their own musical world(s), as long as any lyrics are school-appropriate. Each piece is introduced with an explanation of why it is interesting or important. Students write short reviews of the orchestra world piece that include musical observations of instrumentation, tempo, dynamics, and expressive elements, and their musical opinions.

Structured Listening Units

A common strand in Standards in the references the artistic processes of responding or critiquing, which includes listening. High school students can analyze how personal, social, cultural and historical contexts influence the creation, interpretation or performance of music. Deeper understanding can be achieved if more background information is provided for pieces being performed or heard. Each teacher must decide how much time is available in class for listening units, how much information should be presented, and how the learning should be assessed.

I have organized units by era, genre or theme, and, when possible, I have connected examples in the listening units to pieces that our school's orchestras have played or could play. Students have been especially attentive if they were able to see or sight-read the parts for the music they were hearing (e.g., Mozart *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik* or Glière *Russian Sailors Dance*).

In Minnesota, teachers are in the beginning stages of implementing this standard, and In 2013 their Department

of Education published a curriculum guide for music and dance with lessons at the elementary, middle, and high school levels that includes recommendation in regard to the music of American Indian tribes and communities. An introduction to American Indian music (pp. 4-8) is a good background or cultural context for every teacher. The lesson outline may provide some ideas for your classroom. For example, consider a "compare and contrast" discussion that examines traditional powwow music and dance with students' experience of music and dance.

For students and teachers who develop a strong interest in music listening, Minnesota also sponsors a High School Music Listening Contest which is an extra-curricular activity with excellent listening examples and supporting materials. Students work together in teams of three while supervised by an adult coach. Detailed information can be found at www.musiclisteningcontest.com.

Resources

Minnesota Department of Education. Minnesota Academic Standards in the Arts. 2008. <http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/Arts/index.html>

Minnesota Department of Education, Office of Indian Education. American Indian History, Culture and Language, Curriculum Framework: Music and Dance. <http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/Curri>

Ed Schaeffle teaches orchestra at Blaine High School in Anoka, MN.

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Each teacher must decide how much time is available in class for listening units, how much information should be presented, and how the learning should be assessed.

Elementary Choir

from the Elementary Chair



The topic for my SEGUE article this issue is elementary choir. If you are an instrument or movement person, please bear with me as there will be future publications.

If you've ever sung in a choir, then you know the feeling; sensory overload. Close proximity with others, constant sound (including the silence), engaging the body from head to toe, and waves of emotion all combine for an experience unlike anything else. For some of us, it's a spiritual experience, as we connect to the meaning of the lyrics and are thankful for the voices we've been given. Singing sets humans apart from all other creatures on Earth and can give us joy. I think that is reason enough for us to ensure that our children reap the benefits of singing in a choir, too. If your school doesn't have an organized choir that meets on a regular basis, I encourage you to consider it. Elementary choirs take different forms across the state, ranging in age levels and practices from the recess rehearsal, to before school and everywhere in between.

In the past, I have met with my choirs during lunch, but now my choir meets for an hour once a week as part of our afterschool program, but it isn't open to everyone. I invite select students and they are the only ones allowed to sign up. As a result, I have 34 singers from 3rd-6th grades. Our gigs include the local Senior Citizen's Center, the Capitol at Christmas and sometimes Music In Our Schools Month, one honor assembly, afterschool open house, and anything else that comes along. Our biggest project is performing with the Southeast Arkansas Festival Chorus. Despite many missed rehearsals due to inclement weather, we just had our seventh festival! This is a day much like an all-region choir, but for children in 4th-6th grades. Participating directors teach the music to their chosen students, and then all schools come together for a day of rehearsing and give a concert at the end of the day.

Haley Greer Chair Column

If there isn't a festival chorus in your area, I encourage you to start one with fellow music teachers. It isn't hard to do, and the children gain experience that will help them in secondary choirs. If you're unsure what a clinic should look like, the Honors Chorus at the ArkMEA Fall Conference is a good model. You can enter six of your top singers and observe rehearsals being led by experienced elementary choral clinicians.

As we bring another school year to a close, I hope you will consider adding your own elementary chorus to your school's music program next year. Also, now is the time to start planning to attend the ArkMEA Fall Conference and which six students you can bring to the Honors Chorus. Have a refreshing, relaxing summer break!

Haley Greer, Monticello Schools
ArkMEA Elementary Chair



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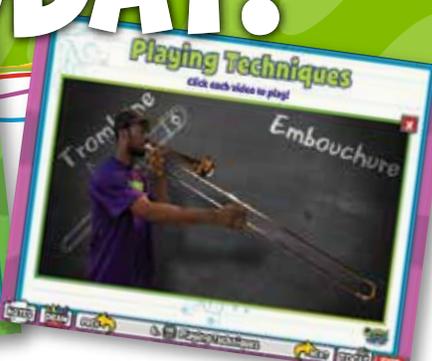
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