

WESTCHESTER MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHORAL MUSIC CURRICULUM

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Context

Westchester Middle School's vocal music program has been booming and flourishing for the past several years and this year, chorus has become a curricular class. There are separate choruses for 6th, 7th and 8th grade and ensemble enrollment is approximately 25 (6th Grade), 50 (7th Grade) and 60 (8th Grade). There is no prerequisite for joining chorus and all are welcome to select the class as one of their electives. We welcome seasoned performers as well as those for whom this will be their first middle school music experience. Students are also welcome to be members of both the WMS band program and WMS chorus program. Students will participate in chorus five days per week for approximately 45 minutes per class. Participation at three evening concerts and after-school dress rehearsals for those concerts is expected, but all other rehearsals will take place during the school day. Students also have the flexibility to sign up for the class for one semester or the full year. Additionally, students have the opportunity to audition for any of the school's extra-curricular ensembles as well as the annual musical.

Philosophy

“Music learning works best when young people are making music, and when their existing passion for music is reflected and built upon in the classroom”

–Lucy Green

“Works of art, if you can move inside them, open up worlds of possibility”

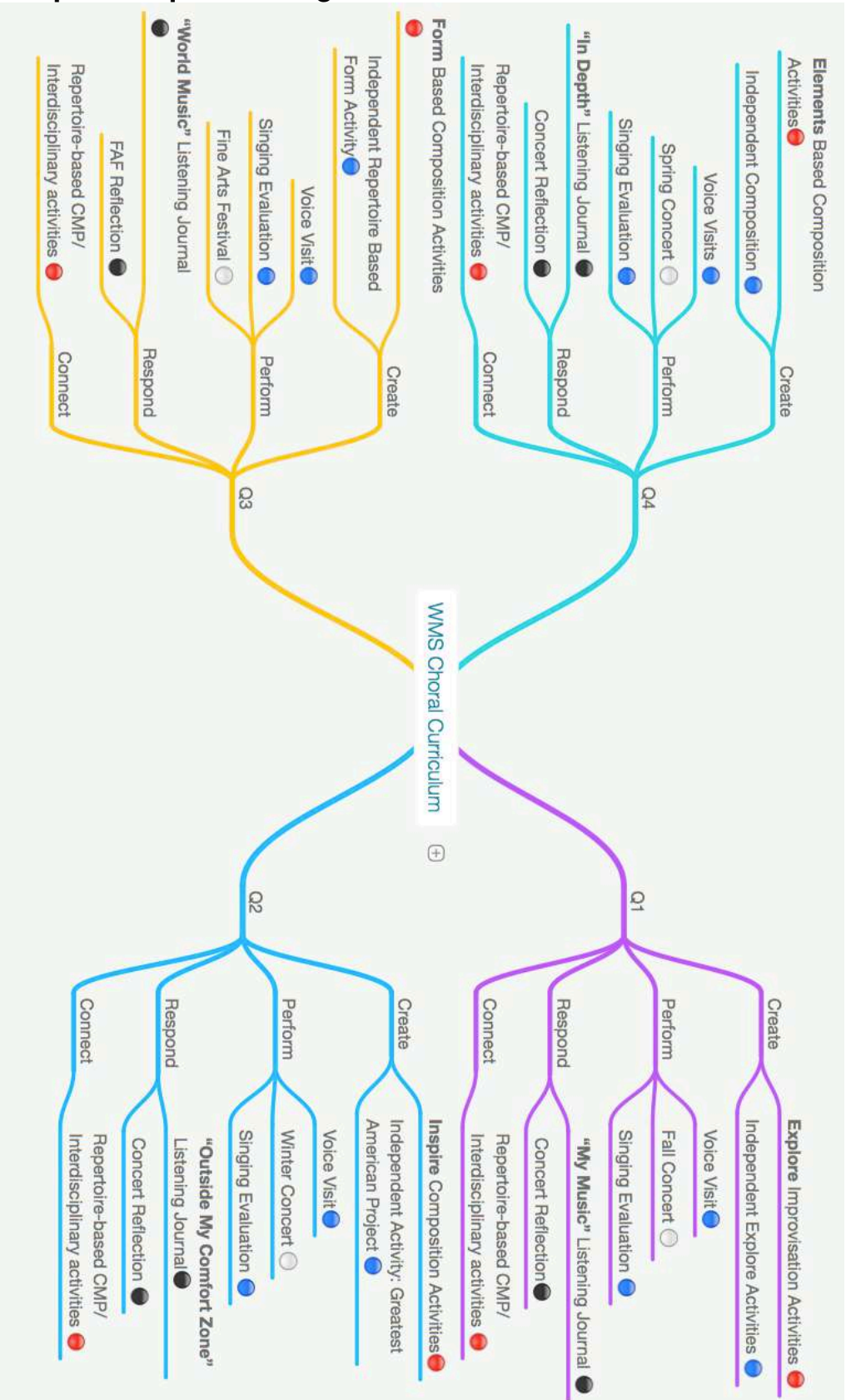
–Maxine Greene

Music is an essential component in the education of the whole person. It is an art form that involves creating, performing, responding and connecting. Students enrolled in music classes have opportunities to explore their creativity, develop musical skills, build interpersonal relationships, share inspiration and engage in meaningful music making that will foster a lifelong love of music. The Westchester Middle School vocal music curriculum will be sequential and based on the National Core Arts Standards of creating, performing, responding and connecting (NCCAS, 2014). The curriculum will offer a balanced approach to learning in both a formal and informal environment. Students will participate in a curriculum that is both student and teacher directed where opportunities for connection beyond the classroom and peer interaction will be supported and encouraged. Students will be taught to work with each other in a mutually supportive environment, engage in conversation, and learn from each other’s perspectives and offerings. Students will be given the freedom to explore the inner workings of music from varying genres both within and outside of their comfort zones. They will spend much of their time making music, learning from each experience to build upon the next opportunity. They will draw connections between the music they are listening to, creating, and performing to their own lives, cultures and other disciplines. Students will be treated as composers and musicians and all opinions will be discussed and respected.

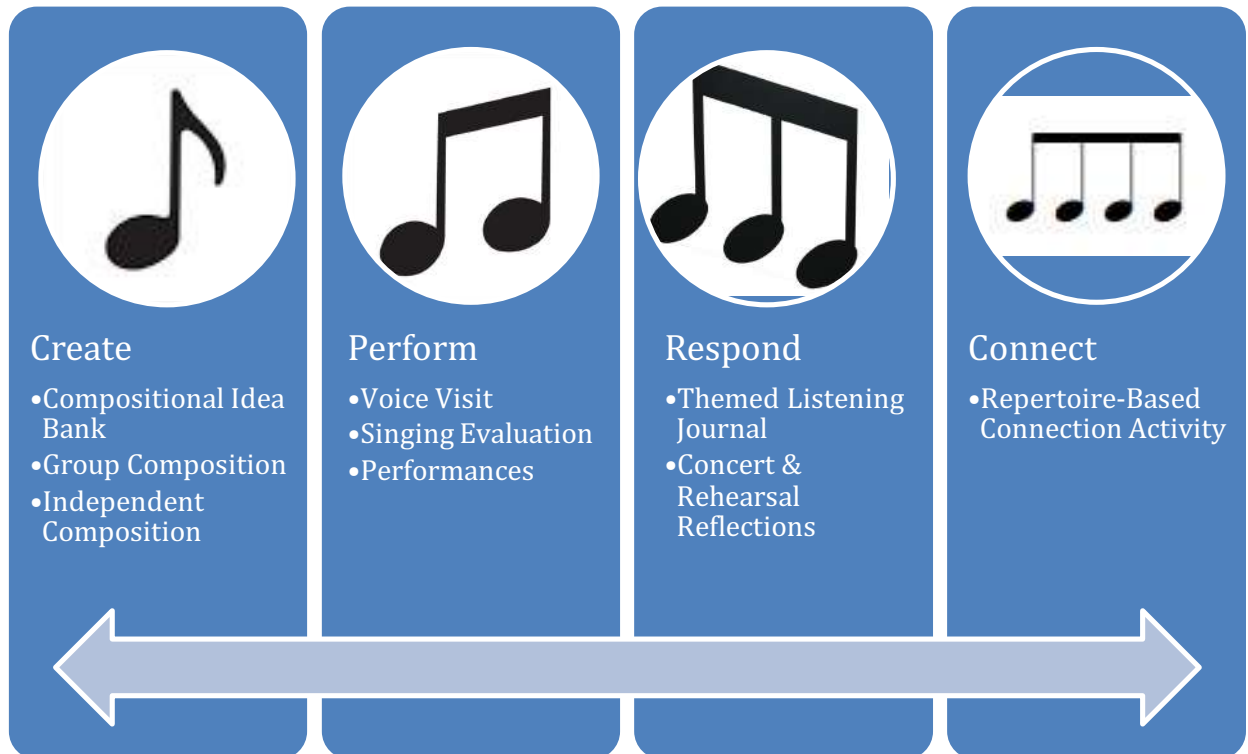
Questions to be explored

1. How does the study of music provide pathways to understand and express life experiences?
2. How can the study of music give students opportunities to explore sounds in both traditional and non-traditional ways?
3. How might students create a variety of musical compositions that relate to and beyond their own world and the music they are performing in class?
4. How can students engage in listening and responding to music with a critical ear and personal connection?
5. How might students connect music from their own culture and personal narrative to the music they are creating, performing and engaging with in class?
6. How might students understand past and present music in order to participate actively in the future?
7. How can music engage students in performance goals that develop their capacity to refine work and aspire to high quality standards?

Scope & Sequence – Figure A



Instructional Strategies – Figure B



CREATE

- A. Ongoing composition idea bank with thoughts and compositional process ideas
- B. Small & large group composition assignments within class
- C. Independent compositions in and out of class

PERFORM

- A. Voice visits with student chosen skills to monitor progress each quarter
- B. Non-graded singing evaluation that is both student and teacher evaluated
- C. Concert performances each quarter

RESPOND

- A. Concert reflections with given prompts and open questions
- B. Rehearsal reflections with given prompts and open questions
- C. Listening log that students will use to evaluate music of their own

choosing within a given theme:

- Q1 – My Music
- Q2 – Outside my Comfort Zone
- Q3 – Music around the World
- Q4 – In-Depth Look

CONNECT

- A. A variety of activities that connect our repertoire to outside music, other disciplines and student culture.

Assessment

Create & Connect Assessment (Create & Connect)

***Composition Activities (Graded & Non-Graded Elements)**

Group composition activities that will often relate to the repertoire as well as to quarter themes of “Explore” (Q1), “Inspire” (Q2), “Form” (Q3), & “Elements” (Q4) (Adapted from Hickey, 2012 framework).

These compositions will be completed in class. Students best work will be uploaded to their school-portfolio.

***Interdisciplinary Connection Activities (Graded)**

Students will have opportunities to complete activities that connect our repertoire to other music, other disciplines and student life outside of class. These connection activities will be completed both in and out of class and students will often be afforded choice among a variety of connection activities.

Performance-Based Skills (Perform)

***Voice Visit (Graded)**

Each quarter, students will meet with the teacher for a one-on-one voice visit where the student will have the opportunity to demonstrate their vocal progress. Students will be able to choose from a variety of skills and/or selections from the repertoire that they think best demonstrates their proficiency. Voice visits will be recorded so that students will be able to listen to their recording and self-evaluate in addition to the teacher's evaluation.

***Student Evaluation (Non-Graded)**

Students will also perform a singing evaluation that will allow them to monitor their progress throughout the year. Students will sing a "pretest" in the fall, work through the piece and eventually sing a "posttest" after working on the piece and their singing skills. They will revisit this piece throughout the year. This will be non-graded, but will allow students to self-evaluate and monitor progress throughout the year.

Listening & Reflection Journal (Respond)

***Concert & Rehearsal Reflection (Graded)**

Following certain rehearsals and each performance experience, students will reflect on things they learned, suggestions for individual and group improvement and thoughts about how they feel about the music they are rehearsing and performing. Some of these reflections will contain prompts, while others will be free writing.

***Listening Activities (Graded)**

Each quarter, students will be working in their journals to complete listening logs. Each quarter has a theme that students will follow, but the ultimate selection of the music they listen to and options for how they respond to the music will be of their own choosing.

Motivation to Learn Assessment (Graded)

Motivation to learn assessment will be based on student attitude, behavior and following the Westchester Middle School music department contract.

Sample Composition Lesson Plans

Scribbling – Explore Lesson 2

Context

This is lesson 2 of 5. Students will be new to choir and new to composing in this context. However, most will have had me as a teacher previously in general music and will have explored composing and playing with sounds. Prior to this lesson, students will have explored their own definitions of music. For this lesson, students will begin to explore sounds their own voices and bodies can make and begin to become comfortable exploring those sounds in class.

Objectives:

- Students will improvise freely using their voices
- Students will listen around the room to hear and react to others' scribbling

Materials:

None

Essential Questions

1. How can we find musical ideas and phrases?
2. What sounds are we capable of making using only ourselves as our instrument?
3. How can we manipulate the sounds we hear to create a group composition?

Rationale: At the beginning of the school year, it is critical that students have the opportunity to begin exploring their voices and become comfortable doing this exploration around each other without embarrassment. Part of the goal of this lesson is to make exploration and improvisation less scary, especially when their instrument is their voice.

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will recall previous discussions about “what is music?” (5 minute discussion)
2. Students will move around the room, each facing out toward the wall.
3. Students will be told to begin exploring their voices freely, making any sounds (singing or not) that they would like (they may also be asked to close their eyes if facing out is not enough to remove inhibitions). (5 minutes)
4. Once students have explored, they will look for a phrase or sound that they can create and repeatedly sustain. (5 minutes)

5. Students will listen around the room for how the different sounds they chose fit together in a class improvisatory composition (2-3 minutes)
6. Students will come back together and discuss how they felt during the exercise and the sounds they heard around the room (10 minutes).

Assessment:

- Are students able to explore sounds freely?
- Are students able to choose a sound or phrase and repeat that sound or phrase?
- Are students able to discuss the sounds they heard within the class composition?
- Within my assessment plan for curriculum, this will be classified as a “group assignment.”

Extensions:

- Students can do the same activity in small groups
- Students can find a way to notate the class composition in graphic notation.

Mixing Up the Mundane – Explore Lesson 3

This is lesson 3 of 5. Students will have had some experience exploring sounds in the classroom prior to this lesson and students will have already discussed how to listen for the sounds we hear around us in everyday life.

Objectives:

- Students will record sounds that occur in daily life
- Students will replicate the sounds they heard using their voices and bodies
- Students will create a musical composition that uses sounds they replicated from their chosen space.
- The musical composition will include notation that will be able to be followed as students are performing.

Materials:

School set of iPads or alternative recording device
Large Craft Paper
Markers

Essential Questions

1. What are the sounds we hear around us in our everyday school lives?
2. How can we replicate those sounds without using instrumentation?
3. How can we manipulate the sounds we hear to create an arrangement of our spaces?

Rationale: I am doing it in an effort to help make my students more aware of their own space and what is around them, but I am also doing it to challenge their understanding of how music is defined and what they are capable of creating with their own voices. I am not necessarily looking for a pretty sound here and I hope that will inspire them to explore the possibilities.

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will recall previous discussions about sounds we hear in everyday life. (5 minute discussion)
2. Students will be broken up into groups of 3-4. Each group will have an iPad or alternative recording device
3. Students will choose a place inside or outside of school (our school is structured in a way where there are courtyards and fields that students can access safely). The place they choose must not interrupt the activities of any other class or staff member. Some suggestions may include: the courtyard with the birdfeeders, the main office, the gymnasium, the cafeteria, the main hallway, etc. (10 minutes)
4. Once students have chosen their place, they will record the sounds they hear for 90 seconds.
5. Students will return to the classroom and listen to the recording they made.
6. Using only their voices, bodies and non-instruments (i.e. students can use a pencil, but not a mallet...they can use a piece of paper, but not a drum), students will try to replicate several of the sounds (or snippets of the sounds) they heard on their recording and while listening in their chosen space. (10 minutes)
7. Students will then combine these sounds to create a composition that is also 90 seconds in length. (10 minutes)
8. Students will notate their composition in any way they choose, but other students should be able to follow along as they perform. (5 minutes)
9. Students will perform their compositions for the class.

Assessment:

- Are students able to successfully record sounds that occur in daily life?
- Are students able to replicate the sounds they heard using their voices and bodies?
- Did students create a musical composition that uses sounds they replicated from their chosen space?
- Did the musical composition include notation that was able to be followed as students were performing?
- This will be classified as a "group activity" assignment.

Extensions:

- Students can ask other groups to perform their compositions, testing to see if their notation is readable.
- Students can ask audience to guess the location where their composition originated.

Predicting, Predicting – Inspiration Lesson 1**Context:**

This lesson will connect to the music we are singing because we will also be exploring the reasons those composers made the choices they did to compose using the poetry, words and music they chose. For this lesson, students will listen to three different pieces, inspired by three different events and explore how that might help them find their own voice as composers. *Note: These students did something similar last year, as demonstrated in my history domain, but this will serve to give them additional options for inspiration.

Rationale:

Students will have already explored a variety of compositional sounds and this section will lead up to a composition based on their “Greatest American” project (see Lesson 5 below).

Objectives:

- Students will listen to four different musical pieces and explore the inspiration behind those pieces.
- Students will discuss the similarities and differences between the pieces.
- Students will predict what the music might sound like based on what they see or discuss prior to listening.

Materials:

Paintings:

Strictly a Sharpshooter – Norman Rockwell

Rothko Chapel

Photograph:

Birds on the Wires – Paulo Pinto

Music:

The Fighter – The Fray (to be paired with Rockwell)

Rothko Chapel – Feldman (to be paired with Rothko)

Pride (In the Name of Love) – U2 (to be paired with discussion re: MLK assassination)

Birds on the Wires – Jarbas Agnelli (to be paired with Pinto)

Essential Questions

1. What can inspire us to create?
2. How have others used paintings, photography and history to create music?
3. How do our predictions of what we might hear differ from the opinions of our classmates?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will make a personal list of what inspires them (5-7 minutes)
2. Students will view or discuss each painting, photograph or historical event and then predict in their journals what each piece may sound like (10 minutes each)
3. Students will listen to the piece and explore how their predictions differed or were the same as the music they heard (5-7 minutes each)
4. Students will discuss different views and ideas presented in the songs and brainstorm additional inspiration that they might have discovered during the activity (15 minutes)

Assessment:

- Are students able to make logical predictions based on what they see and discuss?
- Are students able to list different points of inspiration?
- Are students able to compare their predictions with what they hear?
- This will be classified as a "Listening Journal" assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Additional pieces for listening or viewing
- Student compositions based on a painting, event or photograph.

Greatest American – Inspire Lesson 5

This is an interdisciplinary lesson with Language Arts classes. Students will have had some experience exploring sounds in the classroom prior to this lesson and students will have had experience composing and working with technology (Audacity, sound recording, etc.).

Rationale: Students will be working on their 8th Grade Language Arts Project: The Greatest American, which focuses on one individual that has changed the course of history. Students will have already chosen their person and researched that individual in their language arts classes. Subjects from past projects include: Martin Luther King, Jr., Abraham Lincoln, Rosa Parks, Louis Armstrong, Elvis Presley, JFK, etc. Students create a project (Prezi, Facebook page, PowerPoint) on their individual. I would like to add this composition

component to their projects as an interdisciplinary element, focusing on the words of these Americans.

Objectives:

- Students will record a section of a speech or a series of quotes
- Students will alter the sounds and add additional sound through Audacity
- Students will create a musical composition that represents their Greatest American subject
- Students will embed their composition in their final language arts project, whether they create a Prezi, a Facebook page or a PowerPoint.

Materials:

Computer Lab with access to Audacity

Folder with preselected beats, loops and recordings

Essential Questions

1. How do words inspire us to feel certain emotions? How can music increase that emotional response?
2. How is sound recorded and altered in Audacity?
3. How do sounds layer together to form a background theme?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will choose a section of a speech or series of quotations from their Greatest American. Each speech and/or quote should take no shorter than 30 seconds and no longer than 1 minute when recorded. They will select these speeches/quotes during their Language Arts research. (Done outside of class)
2. Students will record their speech in the computer lab and load into Audacity. (1 class period).
3. Students will listen to a variety of pre-selected beats, loops and recordings that will be placed in a student-accessible folder and work to combine/alter these sounds to create a composition that is approximately 45 seconds-1:30. Students will be required to use at least 2 parts in addition to their own vocal recording. Students will also experiment with altering their own vocal recordings. In the end, it will be their choice if they would like to keep their original recording or use an altered version. The only prerequisite is that the words be understandable. (4-5 lab days)
4. Each student will embed their composition into their presentation.
5. Students will include a writing component (done in cooperation with the Language Arts department) about the emotional impact of these words, why they chose these words, and their compositional choices.
6. Students will present their composition as part of their Greatest American project.

Assessment:

- Are students able to successfully record their own voices?
- Do students use at least 3 additional parts that enhance the words to create a background theme?
- Are students able to successfully articulate the reasons behind their compositional choices?
- This will be graded jointly with the Language Arts teachers, so it will have it's own category within my curriculum assessment framework.

Possible Extensions:

- Students can use a combination of their own voice recordings along with recordings of their subject.
- Students can use an entire speech instead of only a section of the speech
- Students can create a composition that can be used for their entire presentation, rather than just a section of their presentation.

Beginnings and Endings: Form Lesson 2**Context:**

At this point in the year, students will have had opportunities to explore and discover their compositional identities. They will be familiar with themes and variations as well as beginnings and endings of pieces.

Rationale:

Students will have had experience listening to beginnings and endings of various pieces at this point and will now look to create their own beginnings and endings to a partner composition. I am also incorporating a listening exercise with some of their concert music beginnings and endings to see how composers created beginnings and endings for music they are singing.

Objectives:

- Students will listen to and identify beginnings and endings in their concert music.
- Students will compose a melodic beginning or a melodic ending.
- Students will compose a middle section that complements their beginning and ending phrases.

Materials:

Variety of Melodic Instruments (Xylophones, Metallophones, Piano/Keyboard)
Paper & Writing Utensils

Essential Questions:

1. What makes a beginning feel unfinished?
2. What makes an ending feel complete?
3. What are different devices we can use to create feelings of beginning and ending?

Sequence:

1. Students will listen to the first few bars of several pieces of their concert music and discuss how the composer sets the piece up for the audience (10 minutes).
2. Students will listen to the last few bars of the same pieces and discuss how the composer closes the piece (10 minutes).
3. Students will be assigned either “beginning” or “ending.” They will be able to use any melodic instrument they would like (Xylophones, Metallophones, Keyboards, Piano and Voice will all be provided...students who are also in band may choose to use their band instruments) to create their beginning or ending (15 minutes).
4. Students will then pair up with an opposite (each beginning will have an ending). These partners will work together to listen to each other’s phrases and develop a “middle” phrase that joins the two parts together (20 minutes).
5. Students will notate their compositions together in some form of graphic notation (10 minutes).
6. Students will perform compositions for each other (15 minutes).
7. Students will write a reflection based on their choices and working with their partner (10 minutes).

Assessment:

- Are students able to identify beginnings and endings in the concert music?
- Are students able to give characteristics of an effective beginning or ending?
- Are students able to create a beginning or ending?
- Are students able to connect their beginning to an end (or vice versa) with a successful middle section?
- Are students able to create a graphic notation that matches their performance?
- This will be classified as a “group activity” assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Longer phrases
- Group Beginning and each student creates their own ending

VARIATIONS ON A CHILDREN'S TUNE – Form Lesson 5

Rationale:

This will be the final lesson in form. Students will have explored beginnings and endings, theme and variations and different elements of music that might be present in a song. For this task, students will take something that is familiar and make it new. Each group will receive the name of a simple children's tune (Mary Had a Little Lamb, Row Row Your Boat, Happy Birthday, Pop Goes the Weasel, etc). They will be tasked with altering the song in some way to create a variation. They will then create three additional variations that change a different element of the song. By changing some (but not all) elements of a song, students will not only be composing variations, they will also be proving that they understand how to identify and change a single element of the song. Additionally, students will create a form of notation for themselves to represent each variation. Students will not be able to use any additional instruments to create their theme and variations, but can use their voice and body in any way they would like.

Objectives:

- Students will create and perform a theme with four variations for a familiar children's song
- Students will alter one element of the song for each variation (rhythm, words, pitch, dynamics, adding harmony, singing with staccato pitches, tempo changes, placing the beginning phrase at the end, etc.)
- Students will create notation that represents their variations
- Students will identify altered elements in variations performed by their peers.

Materials:

Paper for student notation

Melodic Instruments (Xylophones, Metallophones, Keyboard/Piano)

Essential Questions

1. What is theme and variations?
2. How can I alter a simple song without making the song unrecognizable?
3. What are the different elements that are present in these songs?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will choose a group of 5 people.
2. Each group will receive a children's song (i.e. Mary Had a Little Lamb, Row Row Your Boat, Happy Birthday, Pop Goes the Weasel, etc)
3. Students will alter one element of the song for each of the four variations. They must alter different elements in each variation. Instructions for this section are included in Appendix A. (20-30 minutes)

4. Students will notate their variations in any form that is readable for themselves. (10 minutes)
5. Students will perform their theme and variations for the class. (5-7 minutes per group)
6. Students not in the performing group will guess what changes each group made to create their variations.

Assessment:

- Are students able to create and perform a theme with four variations for a familiar children's song
- Do students alter one element of the song for each variation (rhythm, words, pitch, dynamics, adding harmony, singing with staccato pitches, tempo changes, placing the beginning phrase at the end, etc.)
- Do students create notation that represents their variations
- Are other students able to successfully determine what was changed in each variation?
- This will be classified as a "group activity" assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Use of additional variations
- Use of more complicated songs
- Students create variations of class composed song
- Each group composes their own theme and then creates variations based on their theme

Chordal Warmups – Form Lesson 4

Rationale: This will be the fourth lesson in our form section of our composition unit and will result in a warm-up activity for the ensemble. We will review chord structure together as a class. We will also review appropriate vocal ranges, as they appear on the staff, in class. Students will then create a sequence of four chords that they think sound good together. We will use these chords as warmups to work on tuning as an ensemble.

Objectives:

- Students will create a series of four chords that are vocally appropriate for a vocal ensemble and that they believe sound good together.
- Students will use traditional notation to notate their chords.

Materials:

Staff Paper

Melodic Instruments (Xylophones, Metallophones, Keyboard/Piano)

Essential Questions

1. What is a chord and how do we create a chord?
2. What is an appropriate vocal range for our ensemble?
3. How can we notate four chords that sound good together?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will be introduced to how a chord is built (all students will have some theory background at this point). Students will practice creating and playing their own chords on melodic instruments (15 minutes).
2. Students will discuss appropriate vocal ranges for our ensemble by looking through performance music and singing different scales and warmups in order to create a range that students will need to work within as they create their chords (15 minutes)
3. Students will use a melodic instrument to create a series of four chords that they think sound good together within the vocal range limitations. Students will then notate these chords on staff paper (20 minutes).
4. Chords will be performed in class during warmups to work on tuning.

Assessment:

- Are students able to notate and create chords successfully?
- Are students able to remain within the range limitations presented?
- This will be classified as an “individual choice” assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Use chords in a larger composition project
- Remove limitations and allow students to play chords rather than sing chords
- Have students create a longer sequence of chords to be performed.

Playing with Notation – Musical Elements Lesson 5

Rationale: This will be the final lesson in the musical elements portion of the composition curriculum within my choir class. Students will listen to and read samples of graphic notation like Sound Patterns I by Bernard Rands. After experimenting with the piece, students will work on their own compositions. Ideally, these will be presented in a public forum of some sort. Depending upon timing, these could be presented for our workshop visit to the Intermediate School, Fine Arts Festival or Spring Concert. Any of these venues would be a great opportunity for students to have their compositions “premiered.”

Objectives:

- Students will create and perform a composition using graphic notation for body percussion and/or voices
- Students will develop graphic notation that can be taught to the ensemble and is understandable.
- Students will provide notation parameters that clearly state the goals of the objective.
- Students will have the opportunity to teach their composition to the ensemble.

Materials:

Paper for student notation

Sound Patterns I by Bernard Rands

Essential Questions

1. What is graphic notation and how has it been used by other composers?
2. What is needed to make a score clear to the ensemble that is reading the score?
3. How do we read and perform graphic notation?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will look through Rands “Sound Patterns I” and make predictions about how it will sound (5-10 minutes).
2. Students will work their way through the Rands piece, making note of what information he gives to students as they are performing (10 minutes).
3. Students will divide themselves into groups of approximately 5 students.
4. Students will work on a composition that involves only body percussion and voices, contains 4-8 parts and is no longer than 60 seconds. Students will discuss what needs to be present in their composition in order for an ensemble to successfully achieve the composer’s intent. Students will map out composition in graphic notation (45-60 minutes).
5. Students will present compositions to class, acting as both teacher and composer (10 minutes per group).
6. Students will edit and revise composition as they are teaching to determine where changes could be made to make the composition more clear.
7. Students will reflect on the composition process in journals (10 minutes).
8. Students will perform compositions in a public forum (as described above).

Assessment:

- Are students able to evaluate the Rands piece and take note of what techniques he uses to make his composition clear?

- Do students create a composition that follows the requirements?
- Do students create graphic notation that represents their intentions?
- If graphic notation is unclear, are students able to successfully edit their composition during the teaching process?
- Is the composition teachable to the ensemble?
- This will be classified as a "group activity" assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Use of additional requirements for composition
- Use of more parts for composition
- Longer length of composition

Why do I like what I like? – Big Elements Lesson 1

Rationale: This will be an activity that relates to students' listening journals that they have been working with all year (see larger curriculum document for more information regarding these journals). This will be near the end of the school year when students have spent much of the year filling up their journals. This will be an activity that connects those journals to composition.

Objectives:

- Students will consider their listening journal music and find common themes among songs they enjoy listening to.
- Students will write about those themes as a final journal entry in their listening journals.

Materials:

Listening Journal – Filled out

Essential Questions

1. Why do we enjoy certain songs more than other songs?
2. What are some common themes or rules that "good" music considers?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will discuss how we look at songs and reasons why melodies may or may not be effective. This discussion will include conversations about range, repetition, singability, etc. (15 minutes)
2. In their own listening journals, students will pick 3 songs that they wrote about that they really enjoy and write a reflection on common themes that they find in those songs. (To be completed outside of class)

3. Students will share with classmates what their common themes were to see if we find any consistency within the class (15 minutes)

Assessment:

- Are students able to find common themes among their favorite songs?
- This will be classified as a "listening journal" assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Compose a song using the rules and/or themes that students just created.

The Not So Silent Film – Big Elements Lesson 5

Rationale: This will be a composition experience near the end of the students' time in choir. On our final concert of the year, we will choose a film or TV theme song as part of our repertoire on our Pops Concert. In preparation for this, students will work with a Charlie Chaplin clip from the silent film, "The Kid" that is approximately 2 minutes in length. They will be able to use a variety of classroom instruments, anything they would like to fashion into an instrument, and their own voices to create background music and/or sound effects for their performance. While working, they will focus on the ideas of building tension and release as they are present in their clip. Students will then perform their composition while the film clip is running for the class. Prior to creating their composition, students will watch film clips and discuss why the music is effective or ineffective at creating the intended mood.

Objectives:

- Students will create background music that is appropriate for a film clip.
- Students will consider the moods and events that occur in the clip and choose music that is appropriate for the mood they would like to represent.
- Students will notate their composition as needed in order to perform for the class.

Materials:

Variety of instruments (Including, but not limited to: Drums, Xylophones, Metallophones, Keyboards/Piano, student band instruments)
Several 2-minute clips from Charlie Chaplin: The Kid (available on YouTube)

Essential Questions

1. How does movie music help create a mood or represent an event in a film?
2. How can we represent specific moods or events in our composition?

Sequence: (Times are an approximation and will be adjusted based on student needs)

1. Students will review discussion about how to create feelings of tension, humor, sadness, etc. based on the films and scores listened to and watched in class (10 minutes).
2. Students will divide into groups of 7-8 students and watch a film clip (each group will be able to watch on a computer, allowing them to pause, FF and rew. as needed and each group will receive a different 2 minute clip). (5 minutes).
3. Students will compose a film score to be used in the Charlie Chaplin clip that effectively represents the moods and feelings discussed in class (45 minutes).
4. Students will notate, practice and perform their composition for class while the film is playing (20 minutes).

Assessment:

- Are students able to represent their chosen moods and events appropriately?
- This will be classified as a "group activity" assignment.

Possible Extensions:

- Use a longer film clip.
- Allow students to film their own clip and then create appropriate music for the clip

Sample World Music Lesson Plans

6th Grade Chorus – Africa

Embracing the Context – Discovering Apartheid

Rationale: This will be the first unit for 6th grade students in their discovery of Africa. This work will be in preparation for their Fine Arts Festival performance in March. This lesson is setting up the context for the music

Objectives:

- Students will discover what they already know about Apartheid
- Students will learn about Nelson Mandela
- Students will understand the meaning of Isicathamiya and be able to demonstrate the movement
- Students will understand the use of peaceful protest through song in South Africa.

Materials:

Various You Tube Clips

Listening Journals

Essential Questions

1. What do you know about apartheid?
2. Who was Nelson Mandela?
3. How did Black South Africans use music as a form of peaceful protest?
4. How is music used today as peaceful protest?

Sequence:

1. Students will do a free write to list anything that comes to mind when they think of “protesting.”
2. After a brief discussion, students will list any songs that come to mind when they think of “protest music” (likely answers will include “Same Love” by Macklemore, “Where is the Love” by Black Eyed Peas”
3. Students will watch a video clip from www.zulumusicsouthafrica.com about Isicathamiya (to step lightly) and the teacher will give a brief overview of Nelson Mandela, the struggles with Apartheid and the Black South African Response. Students will then watch a clip of a gumboot dance (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BvNk6HqScBU>) and of famed South African group Ladysmith Black Mambazo (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JFQ1TSzdpRA>). Students will also demonstrate what Isicathamiya looks like and the teacher will bring in several pairs of rainboots (which might be similar to gumboots) to see the difference in sound. As a wrapping up point, students will journal about how they might relate similar struggles in their own lives to those

struggles held by Black South Africans during Apartheid. From this lesson, students will then begin learning “Lizela” and “Amovolovo,” hopefully performing and understanding with more reverence and joy, now that they are aware of the context.

Assessment:

- Do students have a general understanding of Apartheid?
- Do students have a general understanding of Isicathamiya?
- Are students able to connect South African struggles to issues we face today?

7th Grade Chorus - Australia
Learning Sesere Eeye

Rationale: This will be the first unit for 7th grade students in their discovery of Australia. This work will be in preparation for their Fine Arts Festival performance in March. This lesson is learning the first of two Aboriginal pieces they will be performing.

Objectives:

- Students will learn the vocals and movement for “Sesere Eeye”

Materials:

None

Essential Questions

1. How can we balance a piece in 3-part harmony?
2. How do the movements for this piece effect the presentation?

Sequence:

1. Students will stand in a circle and echo the teacher’s singing of Sesere Eeye’s melody (the middle, or SII part).
2. Once students are catching on the middle part, the teacher will stop and review the words in rhythm: “Sesere eeye, sesere eeye, nari nari, na ropa te, ropa te marousiyama, te sesere eeye,” explaining that this is a game song and the words have no particular meaning.
3. Students will review the melody and begin adding movement. Once students have spent enough time going through the melody and movement that it is sticking, the teacher will begin introducing the Soprano I and Alto lines, if there is time. If there is not time, the piece will be revisited in the next lesson with the second two parts introduced.

Assessment:

- Are students able to grasp the melody of the piece?
- Are students able to grasp the text of the piece?
- Are students able to grasp the movement in the piece?

8th Grade Chorus - Indonesia**Opening up with a Kecak**

Rationale: This will be the first unit for 8th grade students in their discovery of Indonesia. This work will be in preparation for their Fine Arts Festival performance in March. This lesson is learning a kecak, which they will be performing. Students will also be creating and composing their own kecak.

Objectives:

- Students will learn the vocals and movement for a kecak
- Students will learn about the storytelling aspects of a kecak

Materials:

None

Essential Questions

1. How do the different rhythms of a kecak fit together?
2. What would a typical kecak story look and sound like?

Sequence:

1. Students will start out learning the three different rhythms (as taught by Mirah and Chika Kertayuda). If possible, a culture bearer will be present for this part of the teaching, if not the teacher will serve as culture bearer and facilitate.
2. Students will practice coming in with different rhythms will sitting in a circle.
3. Students will learn and add the second part of the kecak and review several times.
4. Students and teacher (and/or culture bearers) will discuss the types of stories that would be told via dance inside the kecak circle. Students will watch an example of a kecak (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Or110h7rk9Q>) by California State Summer School of the Arts.
If time, students will continue practicing and rehearsing and brainstorming about different “folk” stories that might be told in a kecak.

Assessment:

- Are students able to successfully work with all three rhythms?
- Are students able to describe the purpose of a kecak?

Appendix A – Variations Worksheet

Name: _____

Variations on a Familiar Tune Activity

1. Choose a group of 4-5 people to work with on this activity.
 1. Students will choose a group of 5 people.
 2. Each group will choose a familiar song from out of a hat. Song choices include
 - Mary Had a Little Lamb
 - Twinkle Twinkle Little Star
 - Happy Birthday
 - Pop Goes the Weasal
 - Other similar tunes
 3. Sing through the song to make sure that everyone in your group knows how it goes!
 4. You are going to perform this song 5 times. The first time is the theme – the original tune. For each variation, you are going to alter one element of the song. For example:
 - Change up the rhythm! Make it really long or really quick. Swing the notes with syncopation.

 - Change the words, but keep the original tune.

 - Divide the song into section and sing them out of order

 - Add a second part (harmony) to the song

 - Add a beatboxer and rap the song instead of singing it

 - Anything else you can think of to make the song different!
5. Notate your theme and variations so that you remember it
6. Perform your theme and variations for the class!

Appendix B – Funding Opportunities for World Music Program

FUNDING

The following are several possible avenues for funding for this project.

Westchester Education Foundation – Funding for individual teachers based on project suggestions. They would likely fund an experience with a culture bearer.

DonorsChoose – I think this would be ideal for working towards funding for instruments.

Target Corporation – Field Trip Grant – This would work to take the students to a place where they could interact with authentic instruments.

Department of Music Fundraising – While this money is set specifically for “choral” activities, we could potentially use it for a culture bearer experience.

Mockingbird Foundation – Looks for new and innovative ways to support music endeavors. This would potentially be an avenue for working with a culture bearer.

**Because I am looking at several different places, rather than focusing on one place, I know it is unlikely that I will receive funding for each group to have the opportunity to play on authentic instruments and/or interact with a culture bearer. However, I will prioritize which experiences will need funding.

Context

Westchester Middle School is located in Westchester, IL a middle-class Chicago suburb. The 400 students at the school are fairly evenly split between Caucasian (with a significant population of first-generation American students whose parents immigrate from Eastern Europe), African-American, and Hispanic (mostly Mexican-Americans). This racial breakdown is fairly representative of the racial breakdown of the ensemble music programs at WMS, but it does not reflect the town as a whole. The town is 85% Caucasian with a large population of retirees. Approximately 20% of students at WMS are classified as being “low-income.”

I began teaching at WMS two years ago and at that time the choral program served approximately 40 students and was an extracurricular activity. In my time at WMS, numbers grew to over 100 and several additional opportunities for vocal music were offered to students. Beginning next year, choral music will be an academic class that is open to any and all students at Westchester Middle School. Current class enrollment is approximately 60 students in 8th grade choir, 50 students in 7th grade choir and 25 students in 6th grade choir. Chorus is a one-semester class that students have the option to renew in the spring (to take the class for a full year) or students have the opportunity to join at semester and participate in the Spring. There are two additional extracurricular auditioned groups that pull from these choral ensembles before and after school and there is an annual school musical. I have significant autonomy for this class at WMS, but students are expected to

perform in several school concerts and the National Core Arts Standards need to be generally present in my class curriculum. Technology availability at the school is rather minimal, but students do have an e-portfolio that I will be making use of in my curriculum. The school's financial situation is tight and this class needs to run with zero additional funding.

Philosophical Underpinnings

In her 1995 article on the metaphor of music education philosophy and community, Jorgensen states that whether by choice or not, the culture that shapes the physical place in which our students live has a large impact on the lives of our students. Jorgensen also goes on to describe place as going beyond the physical to a psychological understanding. This is the place we create inside our own headspace. In this understanding of place, music education should rely on shared understandings and practices that are present in the classroom. The music classroom should promote feelings of self-identity through, not despite, interconnectedness with others. This creation of "place" begins with an understanding and comfort in one's own musical traditions. These traditions and cultures delve into family histories, student home life, cultural roots, popular music, student compositions and any other type of music students may engage with regularly. In choosing to create both physical and psychological space in our classrooms where students can feel comfortable in their own musical traditions, we open up opportunities for students to make deep, lasting connections (Greene, 1988). Within this curriculum, there are several places where students have the opportunity to bring their own musical

knowledge into the classroom to be celebrated, including listening journals that are based on their own tastes and interdisciplinary/CMP based connections that will bring student home life into their academic space.

Once students become comfortable in their own practices and habits, we are able to invite and empower them to consider these traditions through a new lens or to make connections to traditions that may be new for them. Small (1998) suggests that this is done most effectively through the act of “musicking” or doing music. Small defines musicking as such: “to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance or by dancing” (p. 9). Through these shared practices, students begin to embrace new perspectives and, Small argues, understand the nature that music fulfills in human life, even well beyond the classroom. By considering music and its role in life beyond performances, concerts and graduations, students are able to see music as a way to connect with other people and as a way to represent themselves in society. They begin to understand that what they listen to and how they listen is impacted by their interactions with others and the cultures from which they come. The same applies for those around them. Music becomes a form of self-identity and students are able to consume music in a more thoughtful way. Within this curriculum, students approach their repertoire and the idea of music from a variety of avenues, rather than simply through performance. They engage with music in each class, sometimes serving as performers, sometimes as listeners, sometimes as evaluators and sometimes as creators.

In Herbert Kliebard's (1972) list of metaphors for curriculum design, he compares curriculum to travel. In this metaphor, Kliebard points out that the journey each student has through their education is individual and that variety among students is not only accepted, it is celebrated. He states, "No effort is made to anticipate the exact nature of the effect on the traveler; but a great effort is made to plot the route so that the journey will be as rich, as fascinating, and as memorable as possible" (p. 404). This is representative of my own curriculum design. While students are given choice in my classroom and student creations and products will differ significantly between peers, the actual content of the class is structured for them. My focus is on giving students the tools necessary to achieve the objectives and several options of pathways to arrive at those objectives, but not to expect that each child could (or should) walk the same path.

In a similar vein, Greene (2000) speaks about the idea of opening spaces for students to break out of the confinement of expectation. This freedom allows students to find their own passion, discover on their own and create their own identity. It keeps them curious. In his 2006 TED Talk, Ken Robinson asserts that students enter our education system innately curious and with a passion for learning. When we stifle that curiosity and force students to follow a path that allows for little to no choice, we slowly squeeze that love of learning out of them (Robinson, 2006). To encourage our students to explore within and among disciplines prepares them for life beyond schooling and aids them in creating a sense of self-identity.

National Core Arts Standards

The National Core Arts Standards (2014) of create, perform, respond and connect form the basic framework for my curriculum. However, while my own curriculum does operate within the National Core Arts Standards, it does not do so uniformly. Students are given freedom to create and have a sense of choice within those standards to show their own individualized learning process. Small (1998) acknowledges this need for both formal and informal learning within a classroom. He takes into consideration that our students will not all become highly-skilled performers at the end of their careers, so it is important to consider the social context of music in order to support meaningful development in our students. Creating a spiral of relationships between performance pieces, performances themselves, ourselves and our audiences and even, I would add, our students and the music is what we should direct our aim toward. By supporting and encouraging these connections as well as open dialogue and student exploration, we are preparing students for a lifetime of musicking.

These opportunities for exploration and the continual making of music are also supported by Gardner's Arts Propel document (1989). Gardner states, "Children learn best when they are actively involved in their subject matter" (p. 76). He also advocates for other music and interdisciplinary connections to arise organically from the context of the music the students are creating. By relating much of the curriculum to the repertoire that is being performed (composition activities, interdisciplinary activities, listening/evaluation activities)

back to the music that students are created, a deeper connection is being made for each student. Additionally, while skills and concepts are a section of this curriculum, the curriculum itself does not rest upon whether or not a student can identify a particular interval or sightread a piece in d minor. Gardner adds, “artistic learning does not merely entail the mastery of a set of skills or concepts” (p. 77). Music is a profound experience in that it is both individual and social and is grounded in expression. Students should not be bogged down by a belief that music is based solely on individual skill that is removed from the context of actual music making. By working with graded and non-graded assessments in this curriculum, students have the freedom to succeed without fear of academic failure.

Some praxial philosophies of music education are about engaging in performance as the ultimate goal, but if we set our students up to place that performance domain on a higher pedestal than other interactions with music, we are stunting the untapped potential of many of our students. In Reimer’s curriculum (2003) as suggested in his philosophy, he considers a variety of ways students may participate in music that are also processes worth exploring. Music theory, music history, composition and songwriting, critiquing and evaluation music are all alternatives to (and/or complementary to) performing music. They can be combined or nurtured in various combinations. The more of these opportunities for “process” we offer our students, the greater the chance that our students may make connections that will lead to a lifelong engagement in the arts.

World Music

The term “multicultural” is used frequently within the music education realm and most teachers include a multicultural dimension to their music curriculum. This struggle still causes tension and should open the need for dialogue about how we use multicultural music in the classroom. Reimer (2003) proposes a synergistic approach to our use of multiculturalism. He advises that we first accept that culture is everywhere. No one lives in a vacuum without culture. He argues that it is impossible to become fully engaged in another culture’s musical being. However, we can engage to some extent. That engagement, even if only to some extent, is critical because it allows us to expand ourselves and to become deeper if we allow our souls to “commingle” with those of another culture and that it is our job to teach within the “three dimensions of the human paradox:” we must help our students understand that everyone creates musical meaning, meaning stems from culture and that it is fundamental that we understand our own culture and are willing to share it with others (and vice versa) (p. 191).

It is my belief that multicultural music should not be treated as the “other” in music education curricula, but it should fold in and be an organic part of the learning process. Volk (2002) explores this idea and the trouble with viewing music as an outsider versus as an insider, but I think it is also important to recognize that the Western classical traditions that we teach our students also have them operating often as outsiders. Our students do not live in 19th century Europe, where much of our tradition generates, but that does not stop us from

teaching in that way. By regularly engaging students in a variety of cultural musical experiences, along with the cultures of popular and classical music, we are providing them with a basis for drawing connections and setting contexts for different musical experiences.

Through this process there are several key components. First, it is critical for students to learn the context of any music that they perform, multicultural music is no different. This does not just enhance the experience; it is at the heart of the experience. Campbell (2014) considers this in the “integrating world music” stage of her World Music Pedagogy. Second, students should learn multicultural music in its traditional form, rather than a Westernized version of a piece. Volk (2002) agrees with this and suggests the use of the most authentically plausible version of a song. When possible, students should learn as natives would learn. Third, when possible, students should learn from someone who is a culture bearer for that country. The use of a culture-bearer is regularly discussed by scholars such as Campbell (2014), Abril (2009, 2013), Mixon (2009) and Shaw (2012). Some of these culture bearers may be your own students if you are pursuing a cultural experience that is responsive to a group of students in your own classroom. Learning without several layers of “middlemen” allows for a more authentic experience. Finally, students should, when possible, be given the opportunity to use authentic instruments. Volk (2002) agrees, suggesting that the most authentic experience possible should be given. This rationale provides a philosophical basis for the experiences offered to my students through the curriculum that is presented.

Composition

Not only is the domain of creating a core arts standard (NCCAS, 2014), it is also a way of teaching musical skills and encouraging creativity in our classes. Uptis (1991) states, “If we want children to be musicians, then they should be musicians from the start” (p. 146). Our goal should be to develop the student as whole musician, not as simply a choral singer that can reproduce a sound. This connects to ideas of comprehensive musicianship as well as interdisciplinary studies. In Reimer’s curriculum (2003), he points out the need to develop alternative forms of music literacy in our students and advocates that performance, while important, should not be our only focus. By incorporating composition into our curriculum, we are giving students space to develop their own sense of music and what it means to them. By exposing students to composition earlier, rather than later, we allow students to develop all areas of their musicianship simultaneously and in an interconnected manner.

Hickey (2012) expresses a well-founded belief that creativity itself should reside at the core of everything we do. So often, creativity is an added “element” of musical thinking, but rarely is it offered as being the central focus from which everything else builds upon. Students who have an education based in creativity find themselves with more innovation, self-motivation and, I contend, are more prepared for the reality that they will face after they leave their schooling. They are better prepared to make decisions and solve problems because they have experienced the need to solve problems and create without

always following a strict, prescribed set of directions. Especially in this current climate of high stakes testing, it is critical that the music classroom be a place where students can engage in creativity and experimentation without fear of examination and test scores as an end result.

Upitis (1991) and Hickey (2012) also argues the importance of taking children seriously as musicians and music makers/composers. So often, students fear that they could never “be” a composer. They think that is beyond their personal realm of possibility. One of the most important parts of our job as educators, then, is to create an environment where students feel capable and supported. In this environment, they feel that their music is taken seriously and that their compositions are thoughtfully considered. Treating students as musicians and composers from a young age, rather than only as children “goofing around”, validates the work that they are doing both in and out of our classes.

Within composition, it is important for students to create freely, but, as Hickey (2012) states, “Just as we strive for artistry in performance, we should also strive for developing artistry in composition” (p.156). While free play is important, in my curriculum those skills are then brought into focus as students use their composition skills to complete composition activities that show their own expressive identities and carry aesthetic appeal.

Additionally, composition aids students in developing self-identity, just as participation in ensemble music does. Hickey (2012) states, “Learning to allow

students unique voice and identities to emerge seems to be the most important skill a teacher can possess” (p. 155). When our students perform or compose, especially when they are using their voice, they are at their most vulnerable. Creating an open dialogue with students and a safe space for students to create and work helps them feel comfortable as they share. Ideally, students will learn that their individuality is something to be celebrated and supported.

Students in these classes enter with a variety of skills, but it is important to remember that they do all have skills. As Hickey (2012) writes, “We forget that their home environments are likely full of rich and complex musical sounds, and have been since they were born” (p. 155). It is critical that we not ignore this! Students are already creative and musical when they come to us. We need to stop looking at ourselves as gatekeepers and knowledge bearers, dedicated to only allowing certain music in our classrooms and standing firm as they only ones who can impart knowledge. Both Hickey and Uptis would contend that students know much more than we usually give them credit for.

Connecting

Hickey (2012) supports the idea that real life is not parceled out into specific subjects. We weave together thoughts and actions from different “disciplines” regularly. By providing students with these connections and multiple opportunities for learning grounded in an interdisciplinary curriculum, we are preparing students to make those connections more successfully in their lived realities. Curriculum becomes organic, stemming from lived reality and

student interest, rather than from “book” curriculum. Additionally, when students are able to make connections from music to other subjects and vice versa, administrators and parents are more likely to see the possibilities beyond performance that a successful music program offers.

As students become open to new experiences with varying music, they can also begin to connect to other disciplines through what Jorgensen calls “softened” boundaries (2003). In order to create these permeable confines, we have to look at a more comprehensive method of teaching the music we present to students. By turning the rehearsal or classroom activity into a contextual space in addition to the more praxial activities that often take place, we create spaces for students to see the connections in other disciplines. Young musicians sing with a new sense of veneration when they perform Paul Read’s “Birdsong” with knowledge about Concentration Camps and World War II, the study of the Blues may have deep roots to children living in cities like Chicago or Memphis as they think about the greats that walked the streets before their time, and a tune as simple as “Yankee Doodle” begins to have deeper meaning when students are given the tools to place the context of music. The deeper these connections, the more likely students are to continue making them throughout their educational careers and, eventually, their lives.

Barrett, McCoy and Veblen (1997) argue that music influences, and in turn is influenced by other realms of knowing. “We may approach the work from various perspectives of personal experience, or stances of performer, critic or

creator” (p. 57). The facets model presented by Barrett, McCoy and Veblen is an excellent method for beginning to engage with a piece. Asking where, why and for whom a piece was created, considering the affective qualities of a piece, immersing ourselves in the elements and structure of the piece and understanding how and why this particular piece “works” allows us to engage with repertoire in several ways. This can be seen in my curriculum through the use of connective activities, composition that relates to repertoire, repertoire that relates to student lived understanding and so forth. Sindberg’s (2012) work with the comprehensive musicianship through performance curriculum places repertoire at the center of curriculum, with all activities stemming out from that repertoire. This gives students both a “big picture” and detailed approach to the music they are engaging with.

Assessment

Within my curriculum, there are “non-graded” elements that serve similar, if not greater, purpose than “graded” elements. By removing the fear of grades (but still with the knowledge that work will be thoughtfully considered) from the equation, students feel more willing to experiment and express themselves creatively. Within the performance domain, it takes away some of the anxiety students feel when making themselves vulnerable. Eisner (2002) contends that evaluation and grading are two distinct entities. While grades are important in my curriculum, students are also given the freedom to create and experiment

without the fear of academic failure. Instead, students still see growth through evaluation points (both self-evaluation and teacher-evaluation).

Closing Thoughts

As I contemplate my feelings on my own curriculum, as well as curriculum as a greater entity, I think one of the most important things we can remember is that curriculum is a growing, changing organism. The document itself should be a living thing, grounded in theory and things that “work,” but also reactive to the students in the room and their individual thoughts, ideas and pursuits. When the students themselves are at the center of our curriculum, we are on the right path.

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