

Philosophy of Music Education

Music, in its rawest form, is simply the expression of emotion through sound. It is only through the performance of music that this emotion can be fully expressed. As a music teacher I wholeheartedly believe that the ability to express such powerful emotions is truly a privilege that must be extended to young people. Therefore, in order to require the skills necessary for musical expression, a student must learn through the performance of challenging, but attainable, music. It is only by teaching through this performance-based philosophy that students in my program will develop aesthetic sensibilities and an educated musical taste.

Through the performance of viable music in the classroom, students will develop the physical skills necessary to create sounds that effectively communicate the emotions inherent in musical composition. It is therefore the job of trained music teachers to cultivate these skills in an environment where the means justify the ends. Through these performance-based means of rehearsal and practice techniques, students in my music program will learn the necessary skills to perform various types of western music. By performance in band, students will:

- *Learn musical literacy (reading/writing music)*
- *Be able to produce a quality musical tone on their instrument (breath support, posture, embouchure, etc.)*
- *Play in tune within an ensemble*
- *Learn to balance harmonies and blend within a larger group*
- *Improvise a simple melody or rhythmic pattern*
- *Learn skills specific to their instrument*
- *Appreciate various types of music, both western and non-western*

The above skills will be primarily introduced in a large ensemble setting. Therefore, only music of the highest quality will be selected for performance. Such music, although of high quality, will be challenging, yet attainable, so that the students may feel great satisfaction upon successful mastering and performance of such works. Many of these pieces will be drawn from the standard band repertoire.

Whereas the classical canon of musical repertoire is imperative to the development of musical skills, so is student participation in parallel performing ensembles such as marching band, jazz band, chamber ensembles, and private lessons. These opportunities afford students a well-rounded musical education and offer alternatives for students who are less interested in classical music or in large ensemble settings. Furthermore, performance in these ensembles exposes students to a variety of musical situations and techniques that they would otherwise not be introduced a wind band setting. These include, but are not limited to, jazz improvisation, small group playing, soloing, extended instrument techniques, marching, etc..

Following my performance-based philosophy, I believe public performance is essential to the development of a young musician. Such performances include public concerts, festivals, and contests. These events provide students with the rewarding experience of playing for an appreciative audience. The joy of making beautiful music is certainly realized when an audience applauds the hard work and dedication of young musicians.

While beautiful music is a daily goal in the classroom, other objectives rank high on the list as well. These include the development of the following:

- *“life skills” (communication, teamwork, leadership, discipline, etc.)*
- *self-confidence/motivation*
- *creativity*
- *self-expression*

As a result of the tasks at hand in a music classroom, students must learn to communicate and work together as an interdependent group. Frequently, this environment cultivates leaders who not only assume leadership roles within the classroom, but in the community as well. Secondly, through the performance of music, students gain increased levels of self-confidence and motivation as they tackle specific tasks and progress on their instruments. Because learning how to play music is a progressive task, students are routinely rewarded for their hard work. Music also has the power to stimulate creative impulses in the brain. That humans are born with innate musical instincts is a founding theory in the works of researchers and psychologists such as Howard Gardner. Therefore, a well-rounded music education is absolutely necessary for the full development of the mind. Finally, music, as well as other art forms, provides students for a creative outlet for self expression and emotion.

Music, as an outlet for emotion, is the ideal venue for student's self-expression. In the highly charged emotional school climate of the post-millennium years, we have witnessed tragic events prompted by emotionally unstable and pent-up students. Therefore, the ability of students to express themselves in a unique and creative fashion is absolutely essential. To my knowledge, none of these events involved students involved in their school's music program violently lashing out against their peers. Some may claim this is because music students have something to do after school and are thus less likely to get into trouble. I disagree, and believe the reason runs much deeper. Students in the music departments of our schools are ridiculed, made fun of, and called names perhaps even more frequently than other students because of their participation in the arts. Some are even victims of emotional and physical abuse at home, and are just as "likely" to lash out. But they don't. Our music students don't need guns to express themselves because they have the most powerful tool of expression our civilization has created: music.

Music should be a non-elitist activity. Therefore, all students within a school should be encouraged to participate. To this end, I believe in offering non-performance music courses such as music theory, history, and appreciation. Courses such as these extend musical opportunities to all students within the school.

Not only is a music program part of a school, but it is also part of the larger community. Because citizens support the school with their taxes, some of which are invested in the music department's budget, it is the duty of the music program to offer services to the town. These include parades, pep rallies, performances at community events, and charitable acts. Therefore, a reciprocal relationship exists between the community and music program of a school.

Music has its own way of speaking to students, and teachers must facilitate this in every way possible. By performing music, listening to music, and appreciating music, our youth will develop aesthetic sensibilities and become well-rounded adults. Since post-high school education is an optional adventure, it is the duty of trained professional educators to develop the creative instincts of students.

While realizing that students participate in music for a variety of reasons (musical, social, etc.) it is important to keep the central goal of a music program in mind: to afford student's a well-rounded experience that, at the end of the day, leaves the students with an understanding, appreciation, and educated taste for music. Music is a truly powerful force; a force I can only hope to relate to my students in many, many musical years to come.