

**Big band, small town: The strengthening of music education in
rural schools through performance and community service**

by

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Abstract

The project and subsequent lessons demonstrated in this report are focused on the impact community service has upon band programs in rural schools. The goal of this project was to present an opportunity for the jazz band students to not only add performance hours, but to also give back to the community that supports through many different avenues. As a result of this endeavor, my students gained skills musically, as well as those skills needed to efficiently lead and communicate with each other and effectively plan an event on their own. This project was based on the knowledge and skills that I gained in the summer masters' program, and more specifically in Learning Theories in Music Teaching. Through this project, the summer Masters' program pushed me to get out of my comfort zone and approach performance as service and connect my students to the community.

Over the course of my Masters' Program, I have been able to discover and refine my own philosophy of music education as well as fine tune it to fit the specific needs of my students in my current teaching situation. I have learned how to approach the podium in a different light through score analysis and rehearsal techniques, while also seeing myself as the educator as someone who is a guide in students' learning rather than a boss. I have found what works best for my students, and how to effectively apply those different methods. The high standard of excellence set forth by my professors in the summer Masters' program has aided in my endeavor to continue to hold my students to a high standard of achievement as well as realize what effects music has on their lives and why they continue to perform.

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Dedication

I dedicate this report to all of the students I have taught in the past, who I currently teach, and who I will teach in the future. I try to better myself constantly, to be better for you all!

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Schooling and Education

School is a place where young children to young adults gather to learn how to become functioning and positively contributing members of society. To do this, students need to experience different interactions with each other, and learn how to handle many different situations. School is also a place where young minds are able to grow and figure out who they are and where their place in the world is.

We have schools to serve four main purposes: individual possibility, socialization, human capital, and individual efficiency. Individual possibility refers to the overall education of a student, ensuring they learn about subjects that will aid them in their futures. Socialization refers to the community shaping that occurs within the school walls, interactions with others, and how they create a sense of identity. Human capital refers to how we as a society can sustain current social, economic, and political institutions. Finally, individual efficiency which refers to social mobility and how every student can be afforded the same opportunities post schooling (Raab, 2018).

The role of the educator is to impart knowledge upon students, as well as to facilitate a learning environment that is conducive to questions and discovery. Without question or discovery, the classroom becomes a hierarchy with a teacher in charge, and students there to listen (Jorgensen, 1997). A teacher is someone who is a role model in and out of the classroom. Students look to the teacher for guidance, acceptance, and wisdom. It is important for teachers to realize that students are looking to you at all times. Especially for those students who do not have a positive role model at home.

Music

Music is so much more than learning how to read notes, write rhythms, and play an instrument or sing. Music helps to evoke emotions, develop unity, and foster belonging within the community. Music is therapeutic in a way that nothing else is.

Humans are social beings who crave interaction with others, no matter how many people deny it. One of the best ways to interact with people without talking, or even looking at each other is through music. Music, like no other subject matter, is a way for many students to express themselves, work cooperatively without even having to speak, and even interpret emotions. Hans Christan Anderson once wrote “where words fail, music speaks.” Because music is a way to help people feel either their own emotions, or others’ emotions, it is a very vulnerable subject, and unlike any other.

Music can evoke emotions that are often times difficult to put into words. Certain songs can take you back to a memory or a time in your life that you did not know you had saved in your memory bank. There is so much more to music than just the black ink on a white page. This is a concept I work to teach not only my advanced students, but also my intermediate students. Once notes and rhythms are worked through, the question always becomes “What are you trying to tell the audience through this piece?”

Music’s place in schools

Music addresses the four main purposes of education. Through music, students can find their individual possibility through learning how to read and write notes and rhythms, or how to sing technically or play an instrument. Through music, students can achieve socialization within every element that is done in the music classroom. I have not seen a single music classroom that does not feel like a community, or a small family. Because of the vulnerability of music, students

are asked within their classrooms to put themselves out there without fear of rejection or ridicule. Through music, students achieve human capital within their music community. Students gain perspective on what their place is within the ensemble, and how to best benefit the whole group and not just themselves. Lastly, students find individual efficiency through the social mobility of the classroom, and the leadership roles that naturally occur within music classrooms, and ensembles. Students learn skills to become positive influences in the world. Students learn how to lead, to teach each other, and to communicate efficiently.

Music classrooms should be spaces that are student centered, and led. The role of the educator is to facilitate. There are aspects that need to be directly taught, but students should guide the learning through exploration and experimentation. The music classroom is like a laboratory, a space to hypothesize, ask questions, and learn.¹

My Own Philosophy of Music Education

There are three different approaches to music education, and most if not all music philosophies fall under one of these three categories. They are: utilitarian, praxial, and aesthetic. Many music philosophers will fall under one or two of these categories. The most notable being David Elliott (1995) with the praxial philosophy, and Bennett Reimer (1989) with the aesthetic philosophy. I do not feel as though I fall under one specific category. I believe that each of these brings something different to the table that the other does not. The utilitarian philosophy of music education states that music serves a purpose outside of music itself. There are benefits from participating in music that can be seen in other subject matters. The praxial philosophy

¹ Similar to the Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance process where “the rehearsal is seen as a laboratory where students can develop an understanding of musical concepts such as expression, melody, rhythm, harmony, texture, timbre and form by being involved in a variety of roles including performing, improvising, arranging, composing, conducting, and analyzing music.” (Wisconsin Music Educators Association, 2023).

states that music is both a process and a product. It also proves that music is multidimensional and there is not just one aspect of music; music is history, it is language, it is emotion, it is cultural. Lastly, the aesthetic philosophy celebrates music for music's sake (Boler, 2020).

My own philosophy could be aligned primarily with the praxial philosophy, but also containing some elements of utilitarian and aesthetic philosophies. While I feel that music can serve other purposes than just music for music's sake, I do not believe that its primary purpose is to serve other content areas. While I do believe that music can be beneficial and integral to keying into one's emotions, and serve as a deeper knowledge to your emotions, I do not believe that this is the best philosophy to advocate for music from. The praxial philosophy lends itself to the notion that music is both something, as well as something you participate in.

I believe that music is a connection to other people and communities like Jorgensen, Small, and Eisner. I believe that everyone is involved in the music making process, from the performers, to the conductor, to the audience. I also believe that music is cultural and communal like Christopher Small and Estelle Jorgensen. I believe that music holds many important values to include self-growth and self-knowledge like Elliott (1995). I see students change the way they approach school after being enrolled in a music course, they truly become different people within our classrooms. I also believe that we should approach music education through the eyes of the students and from their social and cultural backgrounds much like Jorgensen. Students will not learn what they do not want to learn, if it is approached in a way that is centered on the students, they will have a higher likelihood to stick with an ensemble, or enjoy what they are doing. I believe that music is something that is done like Small, but like Jorgensen, I believe that music is both something you do, and a thing that can be created. I believe that the process of learning and the process of education is just as important as the outcome like Eisner. Everything we do as

educators is not centered on the few performances that are given in a year, there is so much more value in what we do day to day, and it is what is going to be remembered by our students.

The biggest differences in my personal philosophy of music education and those of David Elliott, Bennett Reimer, Estelle Jorgensen, Christopher Small, and Elliot Eisner are that my philosophy cherry picks what I believe to be the best parts of each. I do not believe that I can fully align with any one of the music philosophers, nor do I believe that anyone should be able to. Every person has their own views, life experiences, and thoughts. Each of these impacts their beliefs and their values.

Philosophies of any kind, should be in a constant state of change and revision because great philosophies much like great educators are constantly changing, learning, and growing. Teachers are life-long learners by nature, therefore their philosophies should reflect that nature. Why should we not expect people to learn and grow in an ever changing world?

What will never change about my philosophy is that I believe to my core that my role as a music educator is to facilitate an ever growing community within my classroom, one that embraces learning, questions, and discourse. A space where my students are encouraged to be creative but disciplined, flexible but prepared, and team players while also becoming the leaders of our future.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

As a music educator, I task myself with providing a welcoming, accepting, and safe environment for students to learn and grow. Music is the vehicle for students to express themselves, and without this welcoming and safe environment, some students may not feel comfortable being vulnerable and will not be able to truly express themselves. Because music is a way to help people feel either their own emotions, or others' emotions, it is a very vulnerable

subject. Students will make mistakes and need to feel that they are not shunned because of them. After all, the only way to grow is to recognize mistakes, forgive, and learn. This type of environment prepares students to become successful and contributing members of our society, a society that is welcoming and forgiving.

I am aware that most students leaving my program will not become professional musicians, or music educators after their schooling. My goal is not to create a class full of professional musicians. However, I hope to foster the value of music in my students and help to create lifelong learners, and lifelong musicians.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

The purpose of this project was for the jazz band students to create an event to serve the community through their musicianship. The community does a lot to support the arts in the district and we as a collective wanted to give back to them in a meaningful way. The plans for this project developed after learning more about music teaching theories. This was based on the engagement theory developed by Dr. Shneiderman and Dr. Kearsley (1998). For this to truly be based on the engagement theory, it had to relate, create, and donate. The event was approached as purely student centered and built. The only items I took care of through this process was facilitate conversations, handle any money, and approve efforts moving forward. Once the idea of a Jazz Tour had been established by the students, I created the project overview as seen below.

Title of Project:	Jazz Tour – National Jazz Day	Project Duration:	February 24 – April 30
Ensemble:	Jazz Ensemble	Grade Level (s):	8-12
Meeting Times:	Monday/Wednesdays – 7:00 AM – 7:40 AM		
Additional Subject Matters to be Addressed:	Communications, Digital Media, Marketing		
Driving Question(s):	How can the Jazz Ensemble serve its community and surrounding areas through their specific skill sets, given talents, and efforts? What would benefit the community and the surrounding area the most, while also benefitting the students?		
Project Proposal:	Members of the Chapman Jazz Ensemble will create a performance day centered on service to the community. The jazz tour will be on National Jazz Day and close out Jazz Appreciation Month on April 30 th . Students will create and select different teams based on their own skills and passions to accomplish different aspects of tour preparation.		

	Students will receive 10 minutes at the beginning of every Monday rehearsal to discuss their progress with the group on their given tasks at hand. Meeting minutes will be recorded and shared amongst the group so they may look back on progress.
Kansas Music Standards (2015) to be Addressed:	Cr.4.I Share personally-developed melodies and rhythmic passages – individually or as an ensemble – that demonstrate understanding of characteristics of music or texts studied in rehearsal. Pr.1.I Select a varied repertoire to study based on music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of formal design in the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual and ensemble. Re.1.I Explain reasons for selecting music citing characteristics found in the music and connections to interest, purpose, and context.
National Music Standards (2014) to be Addressed:	MU:Pr4.1.E.8a Select a varied repertoire to study based on music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of formal design in the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual and ensemble. MU:Pr4.2.E.5a Demonstrate, using music reading skills where appropriate, how the setting and formal characteristics of musical works contribute to understanding the context of the music in prepared or improvised performances. MU:Pr4.3.E.8a Demonstrate understanding and application of expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances. MU:Re7.1.E.8a Explain reasons for selecting music citing characteristics found in the music and connections to interest, purpose, and context.
Additional Skills Required:	Communication, teamwork, research, organization,

Table 2.1 Project Overview

For context, the jazz ensemble is in its second year of performance. The ensemble meets twice a week for 40 minutes at a time. The ensemble is comprised of the higher achieving

musicians in the band program and were each hand selected to perform with the group. This is done due to the lack of rehearsal time and space we are allotted throughout the school week.

As we began the process of this project, students separated into small groups to complete the tasks needed for this tour to succeed. I proposed the different types of groups and from there students joined groups to delve farther into the efforts of making this tour a success. The groups students could be a part of were: Literature, Venue and Schedule, Transportation and Logistics, Marketing, and Attire. The outline of each of these groups' tasks are shown in the table below.

Team	Tasks
Literature	• Select music to perform • Plan for ~30 minutes of music • Who will speak in between pieces? ◦ What will they say? • Create a program digital or paper & print • Scan and copy parts for all personnel • Have music ready to rehearse as soon as music is selected
Venue/Schedule	• Select venues to perform at in Chapman and surrounding areas. • Contact places to perform (3-5 venues) • Set schedule for arrival/departure at each venue ◦ Account for time to unload/pack up • Add in travel time between venues • Add time to stop for lunch (where?) ◦ Contact lunch site ahead of time to let them know we will be coming. • Publish, print and distribute the schedule for the group
Transportation/Logistics	• Submit transportation request for the tour ◦ 1 bus (with driver) 1 suburban w/trailer (with driver) • Communicate with drivers for departures/arrivals and pass along the schedule • Work with transportation group • Plan what equipment needs to be taken care of • Have a plan for load/unload for day of tour
Marketing	• Posters ◦ After approval, print and distribute to performance venues/local spaces • Social media posts ◦ After approval, send to Smallwood to post • Contact paper - write up a short blurb about the tour and where to see performance
Attire	• What will the group wear? • Design a t-shirt for the group • Have a company prepared to make the shirt (what will the cost be?) • Sponsors for t-shirts • How much will they cost? Members pay what? Band covers what?

Table 2.2 Small Group Tasks

Through this venture, students were able to find their strong suits outside of playing and performing on their instruments. Students selected groups and tasks that they felt they would be successful on and positively impact the group. These tasks also gave the chance for students to get out of their comfort zone and participate within a group that they were not so confident in and refine those skills to accomplish the tasks at hand. Finally, students were able to select groups that they were passionate about, some students were very passionate about graphic design and selected either the Attire group or Marketing group. Some students were very passionate about what literature we performed and got to dive into our music library and select what we can sound good on, and what the performance areas will appreciate hearing from our ensemble.

The literature grouping of students spent the most time working with the music itself. Students selected the literature to be performed for the tour, and also created a simplified rehearsal schedule as displayed below. With the short period of time students were to rehearse, we needed to have a plan in place of what needed to be executed and communicated in advance with the ensemble. Watching these students build the rehearsal schedule was very reflective of how I build and communicate my own rehearsals plans to all ensembles.

Each Monday rehearsal the groups convened to discuss what tasks still needed to be completed, and what can be done by each member. After a period of five to ten minute discussion, students reported their progress and I kept minutes of what has been accomplished and what still needed to be done. There were some groups that needed some guidance on how to move forward. A sample of minutes is shown below.

March 24, 2025 - Reports

Venues

- All venues are secured, with performance times.
- Scout manhattan venues - regional solo and ensemble

Schedule

- Schedule is complete and locked in.

Transportation

- TR request almost done and ready to be submitted

Set List

- Begin working on non-concert music next monday.
- Funkytown, Blues Brothers, Megalovania,
- Doxy, Viva la Vida, Guantanamera

Marketing

- Locations and schedules set
- Posters getting ready
- Smallwood send jazz shirt logo

Logistics

- Chairs and stands tagged for transportation
- Any instruments being taken need to be tagged

Attire

- T-shirts final cost \$10 each, students cover \$5, Smallwood will cover \$5.
- If anyone wants additional shirts for family members, they are \$10 each, 2XL - \$12, and 3XL are \$14.

Figure 2.1 Meeting Minutes

Being the first time we have attempted a project of this nature with this specific group, I feel that it went well overall. I hope that in the future more items stem more organically to be true to the ideals of the engagement theory. Students were very engaged in what they were doing and felt that they made a difference in the community. We later received cards from venues thanking us for our time and performance in hopes that we will do something similar to this again. My students and I feel that this made a positive impact on our community and I hope in the future to refine what has been done.

As our jazz ensemble grows and changes, I hope to have more literature for students to select from, and more context for selecting music. As for changing this project in the future, I hope to have some community sponsors for the t-shirts, and potentially music. I also believe I

can make this even more student driven and step back to let them run the project. Students can conduct meetings for themselves, as well as take minutes and share them either on a Google Classroom platform, or Google Drive. Due to the nature of this endeavor, constant and consistent communication was key to the success of this project. In the future, I would like to see communications from students, not to overbear, but to see what is getting done, by whom, and how effective communication is. I believe this would be best served via a running Google Document.

All in all, I am happy with how the event and planning was executed. I believe that the students had the best of intentions going in to the event, and had a great time doing it. After talking to some of the patrons, they would like the jazz ensemble to come out and play more often for certain areas. As the group grows both in size and in musical development, I can see that happening for our future.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

The summer masters' program at K-State has challenged my way of approaching the podium and my classroom. I have been encouraged to expand my thinking about the band program as a whole, as well as each individual ensemble and course I teach. There are many items the ensembles do similarly and some that are unique to that ensemble.

Coursework

I was impacted significantly by the Marching Band Techniques elective, where we were encouraged to have educational discourse, while still respecting our peers and their views. I was able to reshape the way I view marching band and how it is approached through many tough conversations. I believe that my program is on the non-competitive side of the activity, both for my marching ensemble, and my jazz and concert ensembles. While I agree that having bands participating in festivals can be viewed through the lens of trying to become a competitive band program, I do not see that this is the case for my ensembles. I feel that how bands and directors utilize feedback within their ensembles determines the competitiveness of the ensemble. Going through the course and having adjudicator feedback, as well as being able to practice how to give feedback gave me a lot of insight on what it is like from the press box, or the judges table.

In reshaping my view of my program through the competition lens, I had to challenge my own prior beliefs of what the purpose was for my program to exist in my community if not for the competition. This course in addition to Theories of Music Teaching created the Jazz Tour project outlined and described in Chapter Two. This idea has been at the front of my mind since finishing these two classes. I was not sure how it would look in practice within the classroom, but I was very excited to find out where it would take us.

From the beginning of my teaching career, I have strived to give my students choice and voice in the ensemble. That mentality has not shifted or changed, but has been reframed. I am constantly trying to give my students voice in the ensemble, but have not yet tried to allow students to spearhead projects or rehearsals outside of marching band rehearsals. Through this project, I have taken a step back, and allowed students to take over and lead each other and the group.

In Arranging for Bands, we spent a lot of time discussing the difference between arranging and transcribing music. Thanks to the skills I have gained in this course, I was able to more confidently transcribe and arrange music for my different ensembles. Through the continuation of my arranging, I hope to continue to develop my skills in transcription, transposition, and voicings. While I am becoming more comfortable with arranging, I am still a bit uncomfortable with changing voicings and what appropriate voicings are for the sound I want to come out. If I continue to arrange for my ensembles, I hope that I will gain more confidence and experience in changing or altering voicings to emulate the sound I want.

In Organization and Administration of the music program, we spent time working through many leadership texts and delving in to what makes great leaders great and how to transfer that knowledge and philosophy in the music programs. I have given myself a lot of time to really reflect on how I approach the podium and how I select and train student leadership. I believe that educators are lifelong learners that are meant to continually consume and process information to grow and change throughout the course of their teaching career. I hope that I never lose that mindset and continue to challenge myself to get out of my comfort zone to grow and change.

Theories of Music Teaching

While in Theories of Music Teaching, I discovered that there are many theories on how students learn content and behavior, below are the theories I see playing out in my classroom the most. Throughout my time in this course, I have learned that many theories are inherently embedded within my teaching. There are also many theories that I am going to challenge myself moving forward to think about more intentionally to appropriately utilize them in my classrooms.

Within most classrooms, there is an element of both behaviorism and constructivism. In the first few weeks of being in the classroom, much time is being spent on developing relationships with students, as well as training their behaviors and teaching them expectations. I think to the very first day my students come into the classroom, especially the ones that are brand new to the band program. We spend time going through the motions of what being a band student looks like day to day and train them how to act when they come in the room and we practice it. This process involves Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory where students observe the positive behaviors and processes, and they learn from their peers (Wade).

The Social Learning Theory also coincides with Vygotsky's Social Development theory in which students' development can be guided and mediated by their social interactions. I rely heavily on my students in the classroom, who help their stand partners, section mates, and classes. I often find myself having students play for each other to help diagnose problems faster, because they can identify issues with each other much quicker than I can go around the room and find students who are sticking out. They also find it a point of pride that they can help their peers and vice versa. While Bandura's theory shows how students learn from each other and behave in

a similar and mostly positive way, Vygotsky's theory shows how students can utilize each other to further their development in any subject matter.

The theory of Growth Mindset is that which I believe positively impacts students the most. Being an encouraging educator that embraces the "failure" or mistakes freely teaches students that it is okay to make a mistake, so long as we learn from them. I fully believe that failure is a learning opportunity and there is always room for improvement and growth. The way I implement this theory in the classroom is by teaching students that we should encourage attempts, but also encourage peers when they make mistakes. Middle school is a very vulnerable time in students' lives and it can be very intimidating to freely make a mistake, but when students can feel comfortable and supported in their learning environment, it is immeasurable what can be accomplished, which is also rooted in the Brain-Based Learning Theory.

While I chose to focus this project on the Engagement Theory, the theory that impacts music education as a whole the most in my opinion, is Gordon's Music Learning Theory. The "Music Learning Theory provides an elegant Whole/Part/Whole approach to developing audiation." (GIML par. 7) As I tell my students when I ask them to sing in band class, "if you can sing it, you can play it." The theory that students have an easier time seeing the whole and breaking it down to reapproach the whole is how we approach most band literature. I typically begin every concert cycle with sight-reading the piece and then breaking it down over time until performance time.

"A good method tells us what to teach, when to teach it (the best sequencing of instruction), and why to teach it." (GIML par 1) My own theory of music teaching is not new or groundbreaking. My theory of music teaching is instead a culmination of many theories that already exist and have been put into active practice.

Practical Application of Knowledge

All courses offered through the K-State Summer Masters' Program have been incredibly beneficial to my everyday teaching practice. From reframing mindsets to everyday rehearsal adjustments, there is much to be taken away, dissected, and changed in an ever growing and cyclical process. After my first two years of the program, I have created handbooks for each of my music courses, as well as the band program as a whole. I have delved farther into the music thanks to Organization and Administration of the Music Program and Advanced Rehearsal Techniques. There is so much more that goes into teaching music to students than standing on the podium and waving your arms. I have learned how to go about the prep work from music to organization to be better for my students every day.

In conclusion, my learning is never complete. While I have gained tools, skills, and knowledge throughout my time in the K-State Summer Masters' Program, I will always have room to grow. As evidenced in my philosophy of music and education, I firmly believe that educators should be in a constant state of evaluation, improvement, and growth. While this chapter in my life is coming to a close, the book will not be closed. I am grateful for every opportunity granted to me, the learning and growth will never come to an end.

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