

**Student ownership in the band classroom: Assessing student
understanding and increasing student buy-in**

by

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Abstract

In this project, I developed techniques and rehearsal strategies that give students more ownership and musical decision-making opportunities in the middle school and high school band setting. When students are able to make musical decisions and effectively lead their peers in music making experiences, it shows a competent understanding of musicality. It also enhances the cohesive atmosphere of the music classroom, giving the students a bigger stake in the learning occurring. Overall, these techniques have proven to be effective and a useful form of informal assessment during daily lesson planning. Students have been more engaged during lessons and have shown more buy-in to the rehearsal process.

The experiences I have had during my Master's degree program have helped me become a better teacher by exposing me to different philosophies of music education, which in turn has helped me form my own philosophies that inspire my daily teaching. One such self-developed philosophy, which inspired this project, is that the music classroom is a collaborative experience between the teacher and the students. The students have an equal say in the music education experience, and we as teachers need to make sure we plan for that and give our students a chance to take ownership and express their thoughts and feelings. Another development in my teaching due to my Master's program experience would be an increase in my understanding of pedagogical aspects of music education. For example, I now have a better understanding of what makes quality literature and what aspects of that literature I can look for to address the needs of the ensembles I teach. I have also learned new rehearsal techniques that make me a more effective, more engaging teacher in the classroom.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Music education, and education in general, have a very important place in society. They are both essential to providing a successful future for humankind. Both allow children to develop neurologically, with each affecting a different aspect of that brain development. Schooling in general allows a student to enhance their cognitive ability, whether it be through processing information or with problem solving skills. Music education specifically deals with other neurological aspects, such as emotional and creative development. Both in tandem are crucial for complete childhood development.

Schooling is a necessary part of society. As mentioned before, it allows a child to develop cognitively and it allows them to learn necessary problem-solving skills that they will use throughout adulthood. These left-brain skills are crucial to develop, and childhood is the best time to learn them. There is also the social aspect of schooling that is important. School teaches children how to interact with each other, how to interact with adults/superiors, and how to follow a rule structure via their own decision making. It teaches them how to make connections, and that is important as humans are naturally social creatures. We cannot stay alone our entire lives, so we must learn how to interact with other human beings. Making connections will also be beneficial in adulthood when it comes to forming personal and professional relationships. The best source of this “training” in childhood comes from schooling. Schools are a community, and being within those communities is the most effective way to learn necessary life skills.

Schooling can also help develop right brain activity, which includes emotions, personality, and psychology. This is primarily taught through the fine arts, and the most effective among them at developing those traits is music education. Music is an inherently emotional

experience that connects with all humans. It is an avenue of self-expression, an emotional outlet, and a way that the cultures of the world can connect. Music is a tool students can use to understand their emotions, beliefs, and help form their identity. It is crucial that it be included in a child's education, as not having it could result in emotional deficiencies. Music also enhances the social aspect of schooling. It provides a unique opportunity for students to work together toward a creative goal, and can teach life skills such as leadership, self-accountability, and organization. Music education connects to and develops students in a way that nothing else can, and that is why it is a necessary aspect of curriculum.

The purpose and utility of music education extends past the learning to perform. It is important we teach our students how to listen to and understand music as well. Music is first and foremost meant to be consumed and enjoyed, but it is also an elaborate form of storytelling. There is meaning and structure behind it, and being able to listen to and understand those aspects is important to understanding any given piece or performance of music. "In short, musical products - performances, improvisations, compositions, and arrangements - are enmeshed in and derive their nature and significance from their contexts of creation and use. Even the structural details of musical patterns (melodies, harmonies, and so on) owe their characteristic features to the reflections of music makers who work at particular times in the history of their musical cultures" (Elliott, 2005, p. 8). The ability to consume and understand music is just as important to music education as performing it, and thus should also be an essential part of music curriculum. It is also likely to be the most common way students will interact with music throughout their lives, so it is important to develop those listening and comprehension skills.

When general schooling also includes music education, the whole child is being developed. In other words, the intellectual and the emotional needs of the students are being met.

Music “is experienced in a way nothing else in the world precisely matches” (Reimer, 1989, p. 67). This is why it is an important part of education. Music does have utilitarian aspects that affect and enhance other academics, but it is also important to recognize the importance of learning music itself. It is the only area of curriculum that deals with the emotional development and well-being of the students. It also serves many cultural aspects. “Musical enculturation implies understanding the place of music in and through culture and also culture in and through music. To come to understand one’s culture is to acquire wisdom, a holistic grasp of an important body of knowledge and an understanding of the interrelationships among one aspect and another” (Jorgensen, 1997, p. 25). Music is an essential tool in education because it helps make emotional and cultural connections unlike any other subject taught.

My philosophy can be compared and contrasted to the ideas of well-known figures in education and music education. The majority being modeled off the philosophy of Bennett Reimer. His aesthetic approach to music education inspired the importance of the emotional connection of music, and his thoughts against praxialism (specifically David Elliott’s praxial philosophy) and the importance of the consuming of music are also important parts of my philosophy. Not all of my thoughts are similar to Reimer’s. Reimer believes that music can have multiple interpretations and that there is no true meaning behind it. My philosophy resembles more of Elliott’s, where music does have an intended meaning and context. It is important we teach our students how to find those intentions. Another comparison can be made to Estelle Jorgensen’s philosophy on the cultural significance of music education. We both agree that music has important cultural ties, and that without it in our education system we lose those connections. My thoughts are heavily influenced by these philosophers, and learning their views has helped me paint a clearer picture about my own philosophy of music education.

Another major aspect of my philosophy influenced by these philosophers, the aspect that inspired the rehearsal techniques I developed in this Master's report, is that music education is a collaborative experience between the teacher and the student. Each has their own equal part to play in the music classroom, and both deserve some sense of control over the learning happening. The teacher is the trained professional and should have the majority of the input, but it is also their job to guide the students to correct decision making without getting in the way of letting them have some control. The music experience at its core is collaboration between the performer and the listener, so it is important that we as music educators reflect that collaborative environment in our classrooms.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

In summary, music education is important because it teaches students how to develop emotionally, it has several important cultural ties, and has social benefits to help students develop into productive members of society. Music is crucial to the complete education of a student, and all of the aspects of this philosophy inform a complete music education. It is my goal as a music teacher for my students to be able to think about music as more than notes on a page. I want them to find the deeper meaning behind it and make an emotional connection to it. I want them to understand the connections and impact that music makes on culture and society. I want them to have some control in the classroom and show they are capable of making musical decisions. Above all else, I want my students to have a quality experience while in my music classroom and to want to keep music in their lives after they leave my class. If I can provide them with the skills and knowledge listed in this philosophy, I believe I can do that.

Chapter 2 - Rehearsal Strategies

Rehearsal Strategy 1 – Musical Decision Making

Introduction and Context

Student ownership and decision making in the music classroom can take multiple different forms. One of the more direct ways this can happen can be within the music itself. Students have the capability to shape the music in ways they believe make sense by adding dynamics, articulations, and making other adjustments to the way the music is played. This not only assesses musical understanding but allows the ensemble to transform the piece into their own unique interpretation.

This rehearsal strategy involves students making musical decisions within the context of a piece they are rehearsing for performance. They will play a portion of the piece, collaborate on what changes could be made to the music, and use trial and error to see which ideas make the most sense. This will over time develop the ensemble's interpretation of the piece, which will be carried forward into the eventual performance.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Re7.2.E.1a Explain how the analysis of passages and understanding the way the elements of music are manipulated inform the response to music.

MU:Pr4.3.E.1a Demonstrate an understanding of context in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

This particular rehearsal strategy should be utilized in the middle to late stages of a rehearsal cycle on the piece being played. Students should already have the technical aspects of the piece sufficiently rehearsed and should have a general idea of how the big picture of the

piece works. Students should be well versed in musical vocabulary, particularly with dynamics and articulations. Students should also have a general idea of contour and how dynamics enhance a musical phrase.

Rehearsal Strategy Objective

Students will be able to logically add dynamics, articulations, and make other musical decisions about a piece or section of music they are rehearsing to enhance performance quality and musicality, as well as develop the ensemble's unique interpretation of the piece.

Assessment of the Rehearsal Strategy

Musical decisions made by students make sense within the context and contour of the played passage. The trial and error of different ideas shows an improved understanding of musical awareness until a desired result is reached. Multiple interpretations of the music are possible and encouraged to be suggested by the students. If multiple ideas arise, then the director and the ensemble will collaboratively (through trial and error) decide which interpretation feels more appropriate. The result will be how the piece/section of the piece will be performed moving forward in the rehearsal process.

Rehearsal Strategy Sequence

Table 2.1 Rehearsal Strategy 1 Sequence

Order	Activity	Reasoning/Assessment
1	The ensemble will play through the intended piece/section of the piece completely. The director should tell the students to begin conceptualizing dynamics, articulations, and	Students may need a refresher run through of the excerpt. This also gives the students some time to begin brainstorming and creating ideas for what they believe would be appropriate for the music. The director must assess correctness of notes and rhythms here if necessary before moving on to next step.

	other musical adjustments they could make. Repeat this if students need more time forming ideas.	
2	Segment what was played into smaller section. If the section of the piece being addressed is short enough, this is not necessary.	If a large portion of the piece is being addressed, then making decisions on the music will be easier if parsed down to smaller pieces. This also will make communicating ideas easier.
3	Play through the first segment and brainstorm musical ideas collectively when finished. Trial and error the ideas presented, and be sure to at least try every idea presented. Repeat for each of the remaining segments (if necessary).	Student understanding can be assessed through their suggestions and musical choices. If what they are suggesting makes sense with the contour or phrasing of the music, then they understand what the musicality needs to be in the piece. If students are not making logical suggestions, the teacher should re-route the discussion toward something that would make more sense and explain why.
4	Play the whole piece/section of the piece being addressed and see how the musical decisions work from a big picture perspective. Make corrections if necessary. Repeat this process to solidify the changes made, and remind students to write the new changes in their sheet music so it can be remembered going forward.	It is common for musical ideas to work on the small scale, but not in the bigger picture. This is a good time to assess whether or not the students can recognize if their ideas fall into that category and determine if changes or adjustments need to be made to the previously created ideas. It is also a good time to reinforce these new musical ideas so they can continue to be performed.

Reflection of Strategy

The purpose of utilizing this strategy was to see if my students were beginning to develop musicality and have a sense of where they could be more creative with the performance of the music we were rehearsing. Musicianship is often an aspect of our curriculum that is hard to assess with concrete observation and information, so this strategy was a great way to see if my students understood how to be musical. It was also a great chance to give my students an opportunity to be creative with the music. One of the overarching categories of the National Standards that I feel I could lesson plan better for is the Create category. This gives my students the chance to use their musical knowledge to create their own interpretation of the music we rehearse.

In order for this strategy to work effectively, I as the teacher had to utilize asking questions and looking for student input frequently through the activity. I also had to direct the conversation back on track if it were to get off, and inspire and encourage input if the students ever had moments of silence or confusion. This strategy also required a lot of trial and error. We had to put our ideas into practice in order to really assess whether they would work with the music or not. I also made it a point to really take into consideration every student's suggestion, even if it was something that did not make a lot of musical sense. It was important for me that all students felt like they were giving input, and that kept them all engaged and willing to share their ideas.

I do believe this strategy served its purpose. I feel as though the suggestions and responses I received from my students were thoughtful and, for the most part, made sense from a musical perspective. We were able to take the section of music we were working on and shape it into more of our own interpretation (something especially important when it comes to a march). I

will continue to utilize this strategy going forward, but will do a few things differently. In the lessons prior to doing this for the first time on a piece, I will play recordings of different professional performances of the piece for the students. This will start to give them ideas of how the piece could be interpreted, and how they can use listening to start thinking past just the notes on the paper. I could also model the music myself, and could even model different ways to style the music to give the students a better idea how things could be changed.

Utilizing this strategy has resulted in a more concentrated effort on my part of focusing on the creative side of music. We as band directors often fall into a lull of rehearsing to play the music with technical proficiency and do not really get to dive into the musicality side of it. It is important we focus some of our class time on that, because that side of music is what is most important. Musicality helps our students connect to the repertoire we play on an emotional level, which is something that the subject of music does better than any other in academics. That is why it is so important we prioritize that aspect of music in our lessons, and it is also something I will be more conscious to do going forward.

Rehearsal Strategy 2 – Collective Critique of Performance

Introduction and Context

Another form of student ownership in a music classroom comes from the ability to critique and self-assess. It is important students are able to analyze their performance and pick it apart, pointing out which musical aspects they excel at and which ones they need improvement in. They can then use this knowledge, along with the guidance of the teacher, to shape the way a piece will be rehearsed going forward. Utilizing this strategy gives students a say over the direction of their learning, which in turn will motivate students to improve.

This rehearsal strategy involves the teacher listing out specific areas of music for students to self-assess in a piece they are rehearsing. They will then perform the piece, critically thinking about and listening for each musical aspect as they play. Students will then critique their performance by rating each category on how well they believe they did, and then establish a priority order based on which areas need most improvement. The teacher and the students will use this assessment to collaboratively shape the lesson plans for the remainder of the rehearsal cycle on the piece.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr5.3.E.IIa Develop and apply appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music, and evaluate their success.

MU:Re9.1.E.Ia Evaluate works and performances based on personally- or collaboratively-developed criteria, including analysis of the structure and context.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

This strategy should be utilized in the late stages of a rehearsal cycle, when the piece being rehearsed is almost performance ready. Students should be very familiar with the piece, and should have a strong grasp on the technical and musical aspects of it. Students should also have an awareness of the ensemble as a whole and how they are faring in different musical categories on that particular piece. For example, how correct the rhythmic accuracy is or how well balanced the ensemble plays together.

Rehearsal Strategy Objective

Students will be able to assess their performance of a piece of music based on a set of musical categories, rate themselves on a scale on each, and determine which need to be the focuses of rehearsal moving forward.

Assessment of the Rehearsal Strategy

The members of the ensemble can coherently understand which aspects of a piece of music they are strong and weak at, and can verbalize which are the specific ones they need further rehearsal time on. They can then take those particularly weak areas of the piece and effectively prioritize which need the most attention. They can also correctly point out more minute details specific to the piece of music to work on. The director can then take the input of the students to create a short-term rehearsal plan to address those areas that need rehearsal time.

Rehearsal Strategy Sequence

Table 2.2 Rehearsal Strategy 2 Sequence

Order	Activity	Reasoning/Assessment
1	The director will list out the categories of music the students will be self-assessing on. They should write them on a whiteboard or somewhere the students can actively see them while they perform.	It is important the students understand what it is they will be assessing themselves on so they can focus on those specific areas as they perform. Students can have input on any additional topics they would like to critique.
2	Perform the piece completely. The director should remind the students to keep in mind what they will be critiquing when they are done.	Treating the run-through of the piece as a performance is important in order to get the clearest picture possible about which musical categories need addressed. Students should be actively self-assessing as they perform.
3	Go through the entire list of categories to be critiqued. Have the students blindly rank each category 1-5, with	The director should have an idea of which particular areas need improvement. The ratings the students give will not only show where they think the performance is at, but will also allow

	1 representing a low level of mastery and 5 representing a high level. Estimate the class average and write it on the board. After rating, discuss specific issues and spots in the music pertaining to each category.	the director to assess the students and see if they are correct in their self-assessment. It is also important to discuss each category and ask for specific spots in the piece showing why the students gave the rating they did. This shows a clear understanding of what each category is asking and that the students know what to look and listen for to show proficiency in each.
4	After each category has been rated, determine which need the most immediate work. For the top two or three in the priority order, point out specific spots in the music where they are particularly needing work (if applicable). The director will then develop lesson plans over the next few rehearsals to address those needs.	This will allow the students to have input on what they believe to be the most pressing and most important areas to address in the piece. It will also allow the director to further assess if the students are justified in their opinions about what needs improvement. It is crucial that there are discussions about each category when ranking them, especially if the rating given is particularly close. This is another way the director may assess the students' understanding and thought processes.

Reflection of Strategy

Figure 2.1 Results of collaborative critique of the performance during rehearsal

	<u>Rating</u>	<u>Priority</u>
Rhythm	4	6
Note Accuracy	3	2 ★
Musicality (Dynamics, Artic.)	3	3
Intonation	3.5	4
Tempo	3	1 ★
Balance & Blend	3.5	5

The main goal of using this strategy was to give the students some control in developing a rehearsal plan before a performance. It also was a great opportunity assess where their critiquing skills were at and if they recognized when certain aspects of the piece were being performed well or not. By using this rehearsal strategy, the students were forced to pay more attention to the quality of their performance and think critically about the parts they felt could be improved. This not only resulted in the students increasing their capability to self-assess, but also improved their listening and problem-solving skills by pointing out which areas of the music needed addressed immediately.

Utilizing this strategy forced me as the teacher to relinquish control of the class for a brief time. I needed to know where my students' thoughts stood on our performance, and in order to do that they needed to be in control of the direction of class. I also needed to ask questions frequently in order to get to the specific thoughts they were having. These questions asked and details discussed further enhanced my ability to assess whether this activity was working as

intended. It also allowed me the chance to steer the conversation back in the “correct” direction had it gone off course. This was a very student-centric activity, and I as the teacher had to make sure it stayed that way.

I am overall pleased with how this strategy worked out during class. I believe the students were thinking critically of their performance (sometimes too critically in a few students’ cases) and were able to point out the specific areas in which they needed improvement. I also believe their listening and critical thinking skills were enhanced because they were focused on listening for what needed improvement. I will however do a few things differently the next time I incorporate this activity into my rehearsals. I feel like this activity would be even more effective if I used it earlier on in the rehearsal cycle and then did it again in the late stages. Doing this would allow the students to see their progression as the rehearsal cycle went on, and also would allow us to make adjustments to rehearsal plans if we notice certain aspects are improving or staying stagnant. I would also like to be more specific with some of the musical aspects we looked at. For example, rather than using one overarching “Musicality” topic, it could be broken down into two more specific categories such as “Dynamics” and “Articulations”. I could also be more specific when it comes to relating our critiques to the specific piece of music we are rehearsing. Doing so would make our comments more relatable to music and allow the students to see some of the connections being made a bit easier.

I feel like utilizing activities like this one that allows students to be critical of themselves not only increases their ability to self-assess, but also enhances the director’s ability to assess where the ensemble is at from an understanding perspective and from a performance perspective. We rehearse bands for hours on end, day after day. It is very easy for us as directors to become a bit “numb” when it comes to listening to our bands play. Small details are often missed, and we

get so concentrated on certain things that the other mistakes fall through the cracks. Utilizing activities like this gives us several more perspectives of how the rehearsal process of the piece is going. We can use the voices and opinions of our students to show us things we might not have thought about or listened to before. Some directors may not fully trust their students' abilities to give meaningful feedback. But if our students are truly understanding the music (which should be our goal as music educators) and can verbalize their thoughts and opinions about it, then the feedback they give will be useful and can cause positive change in the ensemble.

Rehearsal Strategy 3 – Pedagogical Decision Making

Introduction and Context

A third form of student decision making in a music classroom comes in the ability to select supplemental exercises to enhance the performance of pieces being rehearsed. This is another way students can help shape what happens during the day-to-day rehearsal process. It also assesses if the students have the ability to point out musical concepts within the context of a piece of music, and the ability to decide which exercises could be done to improve them.

This strategy begins with the teacher asking the students to analyze a piece of music that will be the focus of the rehearsal that day. They will then compare it to the daily warm-up exercises the ensemble uses and decide which exercises would be most beneficial for the specified piece of music. Students will either volunteer to recommend an exercise or be randomly selected by the teacher. The ensemble will perform the recommended exercise and then discuss how the exercise benefits the specified piece. They may even collaborate and decide if another exercise would be more beneficial. The process is then repeated for another warm-up exercise.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr5.3.E.IIa Develop and apply appropriate rehearsal strategies to address individual and ensemble challenges in a varied repertoire of music, and evaluate their success.

MU:Re7.1.E.Ia Apply criteria to select music for specified purposes, supporting choices by citing characteristics found in the music and connections to interest, purpose, and context.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students should have a general idea of the challenges presented by the piece of music being specified. This strategy can be utilized at any point during the rehearsal cycle, but it is important the students are at least familiar with the piece. Students should also understand the benefits of each exercise of their warm-up routine, and how that can apply to the music being rehearsed.

Rehearsal Strategy Objective

Students will be able to select activities from their normal warm-up routine that would benefit a specified piece of music being rehearsed, and be able to logically explain their decision-making process.

Assessment of the Rehearsal Strategy

Warm-up activities selected by the students are appropriate for the specified piece of music being rehearsed that day. Students who select the activities are also able to logically support their decision making, and also explain why using this activity would be beneficial to the ensemble. If students give feedback that is not quite in line with what is needed for the piece being rehearsed, the teacher must direct the students toward the correct thought process. This is a technique that can be used at multiple different skill and age levels, so more advanced students should be more detailed in their reasoning for their selections.

Rehearsal Strategy Sequence

Table 2.3 Rehearsal Strategy 3 Sequence

Order	Activity	Reasoning/Assessment
1	The director will specify which piece of music being rehearsed the focus of the day. They will then ask the students to individually think of two exercises from the daily warm-up routine that would directly benefit that piece of music. The students may have their sheet music out for the specified piece to look over while they brainstorm which exercises they think would be beneficial.	It is important to specify which piece is the focal point of the rehearsal that day so that students are mentally engaged into the specific demands and challenges of that particular piece. It is also important to give the students time to think and look over the sheet music so they may begin to create mental connections between the warm-up exercises and certain aspects of the piece, such as the key and style.
2	The director will either ask for volunteers to suggest which warm-up exercise they should do, or randomly pick students to give one of the exercises they individually selected. The student will then back up their selection with specific reasons why they think it relates to the piece being rehearsed.	This gives the students control in some pedagogical aspects of the class by picking which warm-up exercises to play. Asking for volunteers is a great way to see which students are more confident in their ability to understand the connections trying to be made. The director may want to randomly pick students to share their selections as a great way of assessing students who do not normally speak up or are a bit more reserved in nature. Asking the students to explain their reasoning assesses the thought process they went through and whether or not

		the correct connections are being made between the exercise and the piece. If the explanations of connections being made are questionable, it is the teacher's job to either try and understand where the student is coming from (they may just be coming from a different angle) or direct them to a more correct connection.
3	The ensemble will play through the selected exercise. The director will give feedback to how the ensemble played the exercise, make corrections if needed, and ask the group as a whole if they believe this exercise will benefit the specified piece. The ensemble will then play the same exercise again (if necessary).	This ensures that all students are aware of the connections between the exercise and the piece. This is also a great opportunity for students who did not suggest the exercise to chime in with their own thoughts and ideas, and maybe suggest a different exercise that would be more beneficial. Students should not be afraid (and should be encouraged) to speak up if they have any thoughts or opinions that differ from what is currently being discussed, as they may have a unique viewpoint to contribute. It is important to play the exercise again in order to reinforce the connections being made, but pacing of the rehearsal should also be considered.
4	Repeat the above two steps for one or two more students (depending on how much time you have planned for warm-ups in rehearsal). It is important that each student selects different exercises and that each can be applied directly to the specified piece.	Music can be very complex, so there are multiple connections that can be made between warm-up exercises and aspects of a particular piece. It is important for students to recognize how multi-faceted music can be, and this is a great way of assessing if the ensemble can point out all of those different topics. Making sure that each exercise addresses a different component of the music is also important to efficiently use the warm-up section of the rehearsal time. It may

		also point out the specific areas that the ensemble may need more practice with.
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Reflection of Strategy

The primary goal of this rehearsal strategy was to see if my students could make the connections between their normal daily warm-up routine and the music being rehearsed for performance. Oftentimes the warm-up period of class can seem monotonous and pointless to a student, so this is a great way of showing them how important this part of class is and how it can be directly applicable to the music we are rehearsing during the rest of class. It is also another chance to give the students some agency over their learning by allowing them to pick exercises for class. It gives them a sense of control, which in turn also increases buy-in and motivation to participate in that particular section of the rehearsal.

The connection between the warm-up exercises and the performance music was the primary learning point of this exercise. The students came to conclusions about how to relate the two together, and how the exercises are intended to enhance the quality of the performance repertoire. If those connections were not being made by some students, hearing their colleagues speak about them could help them better understand how the two correlate. The students also learned to be more thoughtful with the music they play, and how to recognize certain aspects of rehearsed music they may have never noticed before.

This activity required a heavy amount of student input. I as the teacher was there to facilitate and guide if necessary, but the decisions and the majority of the assessments were made completely by the students. Explanation of decisions was necessary to assess if the students are on the correct track, and student collaboration was key to make the self assessments used in the exercise as effective as they can be. Some trial and error may have been necessary had students

found themselves going down an incorrect path, but during this particular lesson they stayed the course to the correct answers.

I was very pleased with how this activity went, and plan on using it again in the future. I appreciate how this strategy can be used across a multitude of age and skill levels, and how it can have a very positive impact on each regardless of where the students are at. Some changes I would make the next time I do this exercise would include potentially writing my own exercise sheet to use rather than a pre-made set of warm-ups. I could intentionally write exercises for the three or four pieces we rehearse at a time, mix them up, and then see if the students can pick out which exercises are for which piece. Another change I could make is potentially being more specific with what I would like the students to look for, particularly with more advanced aspects. The students did a great job recognizing things like dynamics and style, but more specific things like the key of the song and specific articulations used could have been better pointed out or directed toward on my part. Overall, I feel as though this exercise was still very successful and effective.

Student choice from a pedagogical standpoint is a fantastic tool to use in the classroom to get students to buy in and engage. Allowing them to pick exercises and songs they play and perform gives them a feeling of ownership in the program, which is exactly the goal of this project. This particular exercise is just a stepping stone toward the bigger goal of more student ownership. I am now inspired and encouraged to find different ways I can let my students make more decisions over what they play, while at the same time assuring that the education value is still there. Whether it is researching what other educators have done or developing more ideas of my own, using this exercise has inspired to dive deeper into letting my students take more pedagogical control in the classroom.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

Reflection of Project

Developing and creating this project has been a refreshing, enlightening, and engaging experience. A key point of my philosophy of music education is that the music classroom is an equally collaborative experience between the teacher and the students. That idea was the main inspiration behind developing this project, and continues to be a driving force in the way I lesson plan and establish my classroom. The rehearsal strategies I utilized in this project all proved to be effective and positively impacted my classes. I will continue to diversify my lesson plans, research, and develop more ways to give my students more ownership of their learning and more control in the classroom.

This student ownership idea not only enhances what I believe music education should be, but is also an invaluable tool to retain students in our music programs and keep them engaged, excited, and ready to learn during class. In my experience, students are more likely to be committed and fully participant in whatever they are involved in if they feel as though they play a major role in it. By letting all of our students take the lead and control the direction of our music programs, we let them feel that sense of importance and are then more likely to receive their full effort and attention in return.

Developing the strategies used in this project has also made me more aware of things I can do better as a teacher. I particularly feel as though I can be more varied in my lesson planning. It is common for me to fall into a routine, especially during the middle parts of the school year. Including more variety in my lessons will help increase student engagement and give my students more exposure to things the world of music has to offer. I also need to be more willing to let some control of the classroom go into the hands of my students, which this project

has forced me to do. My philosophy states that I believe that to be important, but my teaching oftentimes does not show it. I trust my students to make informed, thoughtful decisions and I trust that I have taught them the skills to do that. I need to be more willing to give them more opportunities to make those decisions.

This project has opened my eyes to possibilities that exist when you give students more control. They are human beings, just like teachers. They have opinions that need to be heard. They have ideas that are well thought out and can positively contribute to the classroom. They are the most important aspect of the processes that happen in music education. When they have control over their music education, not only are they more likely to be invested in the program, but the educational experiences of everyone involved are enriched.

Reflection of Master's Program

The lessons, techniques, and philosophies I have learned and developed through my Master's program experience at Kansas State University have forged me into a better teacher for my students and a more knowledgeable contributor to the world of music education. I feel as though I have a better grasp of the impact that music has on our students and how I can make their experiences more effective so that they develop a lifelong appreciation of music. I also feel as though I have a better capability of reaching my students where they are at and adjusting my instruction accordingly so that all of them are successful. All of this is accomplished through the musical, teaching, and administrative skills I have learned through the classes I have taken. I truly believe that this Master's program has shaped me into a much more effective music teacher, knowledgeable band director, and developed leader for my students.

The biggest impact this Master's program has had on me is that it has allowed me to expand the horizons of my philosophy of music education and my general idea of what music

education should be. This is particularly because of taking the classes Philosophy of Music Education and Theories of Music Teaching. My perspective on why music education is important was fairly narrow before I started this program. I understood that music was important from a cognitive and emotional standpoint for our students, but my thoughts did not go far past that. I now have a more developed philosophy of my own because I have been exposed to the viewpoints and philosophies of prominent figures in music education. I have been able to take pieces of each and create my vision of why I believe music is important to a child's education. I believe that music education is important because it enriches students' minds, gives them an artistic way to express themselves, and is the only area of education that addresses the student's emotional well-being. There are social, teambuilding, and self-discipline skills that are also taught in a music classroom that are rare or absent anywhere else in a student's education. I also believe that the action of music making, the consumption of music, and the understanding and appreciation of how music works are all equally important to a complete music education. Lastly, I am now of the opinion that music education is a fully collaborative experience between the teacher and the student. Both individuals have capital in the music making experience, and both should (to a certain extent) have control over the direction of certain aspects of the classroom. The teacher is the educated professional, but the students are also taking part in the music process and should be able to have their say.

Developing my own philosophy of music education has also reinvigorated my desire to seek out opportunities to become a better music educator. Now that I have a more developed idea of what my vision of music education is, I am more inspired to acquire the skills and tools necessary to help my students and myself reach that vision. I am now seeking out books to read, conferences to go to, and professional opportunities to take in order to become the band director

I need to be to achieve these new goals. This new philosophy has also affected my daily lesson planning. I am now more frequent with opportunities to let students take the reins during a rehearsal, and willing to let them have more of a say in exercises we practice, music we play, and performances we have. This aspect of my new philosophy was the inspiration behind this project and has changed the music teacher that I am. I also more frequently plan lessons involving listening and interacting with music outside of playing an instrument. My belief is that a total music education involves performing, listening, and creating. It is therefore necessary to plan activities and exercises that get my students involved in all of those aspects.

Another area that has drastically improved in my teaching after this Master's program has been my understanding of what makes quality literature, and how to pick repertoire based on the level of musicianship my ensemble is at. These skills were enhanced through taking the classes Literature Analysis and Advanced Rehearsal Techniques. I feel as though this was a topic that I was particularly weak at before starting this program. I would frequently over-program for my ensembles and pick music that I thought they would find enjoyable, but were too difficult for the skill level they were at (particularly for my middle school ensembles). My ability to effectively pick repertoire that is appropriate for the skill level of the ensembles I teach is now much better. I have a better understanding of how to pick apart a piece of music, determine its strengths and weaknesses, and ultimately predict how my ensemble would do with it. I can also decide if there are educational aspects of the piece of music that would be good for my students to practice. For example, if my students struggle with dynamic contrast and balance, I could pick a lyrical chorale that is within their technical abilities but will also stretch the musicality and listening abilities of my students. I still believe that playing music my students find enjoyable is important

and that they should have some say over the music they perform. But I now have a better understanding of what makes quality, educational repertoire.

There are several pedagogical areas that I have improved in because of my experiences in classes in this program. I am now a more proficient marching band drill writer because of my experiences in Marching Band Techniques. I also have a better understanding of why marching band is important in a band curriculum and what benefits it has to a band program from a community exposure perspective. I have improved at arranging parts and writing exercises for my ensembles and have a better sense of what comfortable part writing and ranges are for each instrument because of Arranging for Bands. I am now able to be more organized and more thorough in planning out my school year for my ensembles because of the lessons I learned in Organization and Administration of a Successful Music Program, as well as understanding what great leadership qualities are based on studying successful leaders. The classes I have taken along the way through this Master's program have helped me greatly when it comes to being a more knowledgeable, more well-rounded music educator.

The impact that this Master's program has had on me is something that I will appreciate and use for the rest of my teaching career. There is no doubt in my mind that I am a far better music educator now than when I started this program. The lessons learned, skills enhanced, and thoughts developed have shaped me into a more knowledgeable and more confident music educator. I now have a clearer picture of what music education is to me because of the ideas I developed during this program. That has also shown me the way to becoming the music educator I want to be.

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