

Teaching vibrato in the middle school classroom

by

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Abstract

The purpose of my project is to teach vibrato to a middle school orchestra class. I chose teaching vibrato as my project because I did not have a full in-depth unit to teach vibrato to my middle school students. Vibrato is an important concept that can be developed before students go to high school, but it is one that is often overlooked in middle school. Teaching vibrato in this manner also gives the students experience with shifting and playing out of first position, which is another needed skill for advancing musicians. Another reason for vibrato is that not many of my students are able to take private lessons. A lot of the study of vibrato is done within private lessons, so I wanted to provide the opportunity for students to learn vibrato in the classroom without having to take lessons. When first developing a plan for the process, I started with the end goal in mind: to have my students implement vibrato in their playing by the time they leave middle school. I wanted there to be a cohesive method to teach basic exercises and developing vibrato for all students on all instruments in my classroom at the same time. The beginning of the process started with the violin and viola players completing exercises that were specific to their instrument while the cello and bass players did exercises that were exclusive to theirs. Once these exercises were implemented, students were performing the exercises for their instrument at the same time. The students then developed the vibrato motion for the second finger and the third finger in third position. This process continued with the first and fourth fingers, and finally playing four note patterns with adding vibrato. Students then moved to first position and performed the same four note patterns to fully develop the vibrato motion and technique. Finally, we added vibrato to a scale that matches our concert repertoire and into our concert repertoire. This process helped my students to advance as musicians and they have another year of middle school to fully develop and become proficient at vibrato before going on to high school.

My development as a teacher has come from the coursework I have done during my time at K-State. Through the upper strings and lower strings methods classes, I learned different techniques of teaching vibrato and I was able to improve my own vibrato skills on each instrument. This has helped me to better understand how to develop lessons that will be efficient and effective for my students. Another strong aspect of my learning at K-State is the work done on my teaching philosophy. As I was reading different music education philosophies and developing my own, I learned more about how my personal philosophy plays a part in how I teach and what type of teacher I am. Finalizing my teaching principals has also played a part in developing my project because I believe that middle school is the best time to learn advanced techniques such as vibrato. My education at K-State has also helped to mold my teaching and develop my confidence as an educator. The feedback that I received from my professors and classmates has encouraged me to think outside of the box with lesson planning, teaching methodologies, and conducting.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Education is an essential part of any person growing up. There are certain skills that children need to learn to be able to be a contributing member of society. School is not only a place for a child to learn and grow academically, but also a place for a child to gain social skills by interacting in classrooms, hallways, sports teams, and music classes with others similar in age. Now, that is not the only way that children gain social skills as we know that many students are homeschooled. Homeschooling allows for more specific skills and subjects to be taught in a manner that is more specific to the child in general. Some children are taught at home on farms where they develop skills in farming both working on the land (crops) and tending to and raising livestock. Regardless of how the education is obtained, getting a formal education is a crucial part of a child's upbringing so that they can function and contribute to our society when they grow up.

In today's world, a lot of students go to school, but spend more time worrying about their safety and mental health than what is being taught in the classroom. With the growing amount of violence threatening our schools, and our world in general, there is a lot more stress and worry put on students before they can even get to learning. I do not think that our law and decision makers put enough thought into how our students were and continue to be affected by Covid-19. We very quickly put students back into school and even passed them on to the next grade when school resumed in the fall of 2020 regardless of where they were in their learning in the spring when the shutdown happened and what learning happened at home during online instruction. This obviously sets students up for failure when they return to school. As we know from Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, the physiological needs of a child are the most important. These needs include air, water, food, shelter, sleep, and clothing. In his paper, *A Theory of Human*

Motivation, Maslow (1943) said, “that in the human being who is missing everything in life in an extreme fashion, it is most likely that the major motivation would be the physiological needs rather than any others” (pg. 373). There are many of today’s students that do not have access to all these needs. When that happens, their time at school is greatly impacted. They may be worried about where their next meal will come from or being able to have somewhere to sleep at night. They may not have internet access or a stable location to complete homework and study. When these things are the primary worries of a child, their academic careers are going to suffer. Counselors, teachers, and other school employees spend a lot of time helping students obtain those basic needs. Once those needs are met, students will be able to thrive in their academics.

History has shown that school originally was designed to create workers for future jobs. Emphasis was placed highly on success versus failure in the classroom. Those that were successful, meaning that they got good grades, were more likely to go to college and then go on to have successful careers. Whereas those who struggled would have less opportunities in life. Over the last several years, schools have started to expand beyond this model and integrate equity into teaching and grading. There has been more grace given to students when it comes to schoolwork. An example of this is that in several districts, students receive at least a 50% for their grade even if they do not complete the assignments. In their grading policy, the Fairfax County School District (2024) states that, “for assignments or assessments where a student made a reasonable attempt to show evidence of their learning, the minimum score that a student can receive is a 50” (para. 4). Their policy also states that, “for teachers using a quarterly gradebook, the final quarter average for students who are below 50% must be converted to a 50% to reduce the disproportionality of a zero on a student’s final work” (para. 6). I believe that this does a disservice to students by allowing those who contribute to their learning and academic success to

pass and move on to the next grade. While proponents of this process suggest that it is giving the students grace when it comes to their schoolwork, students might develop a tendency to expect that they do not have to fully do the work that is given to them when they get into a job outside of school. School is also an important environment to prepare students for having a job and being able to complete a given task correctly and on time as expected.

As we have emerged from the pandemic, stress and pressure on teachers has only increased in both amount and intensity. Teachers are not only having to teach students who are in a grade level above where they probably should be, but they are also supporting and caring for students that are dealing with a lot outside of school. Teachers may also be struggling in their own lives outside of work with the current economy, lack of adequate pay for teachers and other stressors from their personal lives. We are seeing the effects of mental health issues more and more from our students. Sometimes it is hard to find a balance between teaching the content of the class and caring for our students as people.

A classroom environment is very different today than it was when many of our decision makers were teaching (if they ever were.) Teachers are doing everything they can to support and teach students while having policy and curriculum stacked against them. I think if our decision makers spent more time in the classroom, the more weight their decisions would carry. The purpose of education that our decision makers need to focus on is educating the whole student. Yes, spending time teaching them how to read, write, do math problems, and solve scientific equations is very important, but so is providing support for students' mental and physical health. Providing more support staff, more time and resources advocating for and helping students that need it the most is something that needs to be a lot higher on the priority list. I believe that once those needs are met, then students will be more likely and more able to put significant effort into

their schoolwork and their overall outlook of school will change for the better. With the number of issues that schools are having now, it is very important for music and arts programs to exist in schools.

My philosophy about education relates closely to music education. My feelings towards education and music education may seem harsh, but they are rooted in my personal experiences in the classroom. Music education itself has come a long way over the years. The curricula, standards and overall support that has come from professional organizations (i.e. National Association for Music Educators [NAfME] and the American String Teachers Association [ASTA]) have allowed for a smooth transition from the beginning of my career to now being a veteran teacher on faculty. The conferences that are offered throughout the year are wonderful and it is great to be able to connect with “my people.” The ones who do what I do and have a better understanding of what goes on in my classroom because a lot of similar things are happening in theirs. I think an assumption of music education is that it is an activity. Something that is important, but not essential. Something that can be done during the school years but does not expand past that for many people. With the advocacy that is happening now especially with the work of the organizations noted above and the advocating that teachers are doing for themselves, I have seen some changes in these values, more support and emphasis put into arts classes, but there is still a lot more work to do. Unfortunately, history shows that when funding becomes an issue, music and other arts classes are the first to go. This is not helpful for our students. It is only taking away from and lessening their school experience. A lot of students find their place and make their friends in their music classes.

My responses to the second issue come mostly from my real experiences that I have had either as a musician or a music teacher. An administrator that I have worked for previously has

told me point blank that my class is just an activity. I think that perspective right there explains it. This ideology explains how administrators and decision makers view the value of music education. Since then, I have always made it my goal to show how important and impactful my classes are. I feel that administrators and others see music classes as something that is important, but not essential. Music classes seem to be the first to go when the going gets tough. I do not think that they understand how much music and music classes play a role in a student's life. I have had students, especially when I taught high school orchestra, that would tell me that the only reason they would come to school is to be in my class or go to their choir class. This has resonated with me so much because that was the reality for me when I was their age. I dealt with bullying and other issues and the orchestra room was my safe space. I have always strived to make my classroom environment one that is safe for my students.

My philosophy is like that of other philosophers in that I feel that music is something that everyone can experience. Every human is born with some sort of musical talent or desire and those should be explored and discovered. This is like that of David Elliott (2005) and Christopher Small (1998). In school beginning at the elementary level is the best place for music learning to begin. One of the best things that comes from music education is learning about other cultures through music. I think it is good for students to start with formal classical training either on piano or another instrument or through singing, but then can expand to other music styles that are unique and interesting to them.

In conclusion, the educational experience is very important for every child, and I think that students would enjoy school more if their safety and mental health were better taken care of. I do my best in my classroom to provide students with a wide range of music to learn and perform as well as making the environment for students to be safe, feel seen and express their

creativity in ways they may not be able to do elsewhere. I believe there is a disconnect between decision makers and teachers and administrators in the overall structure of what school can and should be. School should be a safe space for students to learn without mental health issues and a lack of basic needs playing such a big part in their lives. Students also need the opportunity to advance in their music classes as they prepare for high school. I take great pride in being the one that provides those opportunities for my students.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

When utilizing my teaching philosophy in my classroom, my goal is to give my students a fulfilling experience while also understanding that my students have a lot of things going on in their lives right now. When they are in my classroom, I want them to feel included and seen while continuing to develop as musicians. My students start orchestra in sixth grade, which is later than a lot of districts. Because of this, I do my best to have my students develop more advanced techniques including shifting and vibrato before they go to high school. No matter when my students start playing in orchestra, and what is going on outside of class, they are capable of great things. Very few of my students take private lessons. In my experience, advanced skills like shifting and vibrato are more often taught in a private lesson setting in middle school rather than in the classroom. Many of the students are not able to take private lessons because of financial situations, scheduling, or other reasons. With that, I want to make sure that they are not missing out on learning those skills. I do not want my students to feel as though they are missing out on something. I still encourage my students to study privately outside of the classroom, but I understand that that is not always an option for them.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

The lessons in this chapter are intended to show the progression of developing vibrato technique and motion for orchestra students. The goal for these lessons is to introduce vibrato, develop vibrato technique and motion, and finally to use vibrato in a piece of music that the orchestra is currently studying. The sequence of the lessons is to give the students small portions that they can practice on their own outside of class or as they are coming in and warming up for the class period to then build upon once they are comfortable and ready for the next step. The class consists of eighteen violinists, six violists, six cellists and four bassists and they are in their second year of orchestra. The class meets daily for 44 minutes.

Lesson Plan 1

National Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Pr6.1.E.5a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

MUPr5.3.E.1a Develop strategies to address expressive challenges in a varied repertoire of music, and evaluate their success using feedback from ensemble peers and others to

MU:Pr4.3.E.8a Demonstrate understanding and application of expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Before learning vibrato, students must be able to demonstrate proper playing position, posture, and left-hand position. Students should also have a good sense of pitch.

Assessment of the Lesson

Assessment of this lesson will be visual observations of the students doing the pre-vibrato exercises. These visual observations will aid in the preparation of the next lesson.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Needed Modifications/Accommodations

There are no needed modification or accommodations for this lesson.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The materials needed for this lesson are instruments and bows. The teacher will have an instrument to use for demonstrations.

Lesson Sequence

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Time
Pre-Vibrato Exercises without the instrument (Hopkins & Culver, 2019)	Begin to develop vibrato motion without the instrument	▪ Violin/Viola players hold their left arm out as if they are holding the instrument. They will bend their arm at the elbow moving their arm forward and backward, keeping their hand, wrist, and arm in line to create the proper motion. ▪ Cello and bass players bring their left hand to their chest and place their fingers on their sternum, keeping their left elbow straight out to the side. The vibrato motion is made by rotating their arm so the fingertips rock and forth on the bone.	7 minutes
Polishing the Strings (Hopkins & Culver, 2019)	Developing the vibrato motion on the instrument	▪ With the instrument in proper playing position, the students will polish the strings by lightly setting their fingers on the D string while maintaining correct hand, arm, and thumb position on the string. ▪ Start with a ride range of motion on the string, gradually decreasing the range with teacher cues until the motion is small enough that the second finger is placed on the string and the vibrato motion is continued.	5 minutes

Table 2.1 Lesson Plan 1

Lesson Plan 2

National Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Pr6.1.E.5a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

MU:Pr4.3.E.8a Demonstrate understanding and application of expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

MUPr5.3.E.1a Develop strategies to address expressive challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success using feedback from ensemble peers and other sources to refine performances.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students must be able to perform the pre-vibrato exercises taught in the previous lesson.

Assessment of the Lesson

Students hold up the number of fingers that reflects how well they feel they are doing with the exercises that have been taught (1-5, 5 being the best). This feedback will be used to determine how much extra practice needs to be done before moving on to the next portion of the unit.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Needed Modifications/Accommodations

Extra time may need to be given to students to review and practice the previously taught exercises. No other accommodation needed.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The materials needed for this lesson are instruments and bows. The teacher will have an instrument to use for demonstrations.

Lesson Sequence

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Time
Review/Check with Stand Partner	Students to practice/review and give/receive feedback with peers. Students are tasked with showing that they know what to look for	- One partner will perform pre-vibrato exercises and polishing the string exercises while the other partner watches and gives constructive feedback to the partner. - The partners switch roles and repeat the process.	3 minutes
Oscillations without the bow	Performing vibrato in quarter, eighth, sixteenth note, and full speed oscillations without the bow	- The metronome will be set at 60 bpm, students will perform quarter note oscillations with their second finger on the D string in third position (A) - Oscillations will continue to eighth note patterns. Once the motion is established, the oscillations will change to sixteenth notes.	6 minutes
Oscillations with the bow (sirens)	Performing vibrato in quarter, eighth, sixteenth note, and full speed oscillations with the bow.	- Students will play A on the D string in third position with their second finger without vibrato motion to establish the pitch. Once pitch is established, the metronome will be set at 60 bpm, students will perform quarter note oscillations with their second finger. - Oscillations will continue to eighth note patterns. Once the motion is established, the oscillations will continue to sixteenth notes.	8 minutes

Table 2.2 Lesson Plan 2

Over the period of a couple of weeks, the same lesson process was used to practice help students develop comfort and confidence when performing vibrato. It was also used to develop vibrato motion and skills with the third finger, first finger and finally fourth finger.

Lesson Plan 3

National Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Pr6.1.E.5a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

MU:Pr4.3.E.8a Demonstrate understanding and application of expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students must be able to complete pre-vibrato exercises as well as correct vibrato motion with each finger.

Assessment of Lesson

	Unsatisfactory 1 point	Developing 2 points	Proficient 3 points
Hand Position	Hand position is not correct while doing vibrato	Hand position is mostly correct	Hand position is always correct when adding vibrato
Speed/Width	Vibrato is slow and wide. Vibrato is too fast and hand is tense.	Vibrato is mostly consistent in speed and width. There is some tension	Vibrato is at an appropriate speed and width through the duration of the passage
Vibrato Motion	Motion is too wide and detached. Vibrato is too fast and jerky.	Motion is correct, but not used consistently	Motion is used consistently and correctly

Table 2.3 Rubric 1

Relevant Contextual Factors and Needed Modifications/Accommodations

Students can review the previously taught portions at a speed that is comfortable to them until they are ready to increase the speed while still maintaining proper hand position and vibrato motion. No other accommodation needed.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The materials needed for this lesson are instruments and bows and a metronome. Teacher will have an instrument to use for demonstrations.

Lesson Sequence

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Time
Review and Practice vibrato exercises and techniques	Review all parts of the process learned to this point	▪ Polishing the string exercises with a wide range of motion ▪ Teacher will give cues when to lessen the motion until the first finger is placed on the D string on the note G. ▪ Students will play the note without vibrato to ensure the note is in tune.	4 minutes
Four-Finger Patterns with the bow in third position	Practice going from one finger to another while adding vibrato in third position.	▪ Students will do vibrato and hold the note G for four counts. ▪ With the teacher's cue, move to the second finger, then third, then fourth. ▪ Reverse the process going from fourth finger to first ▪ Repeat the entire process to develop accuracy.	8 minutes
Four-Finger Patterns with the bow in first position	Practice going from one finger to another while adding vibrato in first position	▪ Students will place their first finger on E on the D string and play the note. ▪ Students will play E with vibrato for four counts. ▪ Teacher will cue for change of notes after each whole note. ▪ The process goes from D to A and back to D.	8 minutes

Table 2.4 Lesson Plan 3

This portion of the lesson was practiced over a period of several days to ensure accuracy and comfort before moving to the final steps of the process.

Lesson Plan 4

National Music Standards (2014) Addressed

MU:Pr6.1.E.5a Demonstrate attention to technical accuracy and expressive qualities in prepared and improvised performances of a varied repertoire of music.

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.5a Identify reasons for selecting music based on characteristics found in the music, connection to interest, and purpose or context.

MU:Pr4.2.E.5a Demonstrate, using music reading skills where appropriate, how knowledge or formal aspects in musical works inform prepared or improvised performances.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students must be able to complete all concepts taught in previous lessons.

Assessment of Lesson

	Unsatisfactory 1 point	Developing 2 points	Proficient 3 points
Use of Vibrato	Vibrato is not used or used for one or two notes	Vibrato is used for several of the notes	Vibrato is consistently used throughout
Vibrato Motion	Motion is tense and jerky or too slow and wide	Motion is inconsistent, motion is correct one some notes, but not all	Motion is correct and consistent throughout the passage
Intonation	Most notes are out of tune with little correction made.	Several notes are out of tune with correction made	Notes are mostly in tune; adjustments are made to fix intonation

Table 2.5 Rubric 2

Relevant Contextual Factors and Needed Modifications/Accommodations

Students can review the previously taught portions at a speed that is comfortable to them until they are ready to increase the speed while still maintaining proper hand position and vibrato motion. No other accommodation needed.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The materials needed for this lesson are instruments and bows and a metronome. Teacher will have an instrument to use for demonstrations.

Lesson Sequence

Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Time
Review and practice four-finger patterns with vibrato in first position.	Warm up	- Teacher will have students complete the four-finger exercise in first position open D, to A (fourth finger for violin/viola) and back to open D. - Perform this a couple of times and offer feedback as needed.	5 minutes
A harmonic minor scale with vibrato	Utilize vibrato while performing the scale that matches the key of the concert piece	- Students will perform the scale based on the handout (Figure 2.1) - Process will be repeated a couple of times to ensure accuracy and understanding	5 minutes
<i>Sinfonia in A Minor</i> excerpt with vibrato (Telemann arr. Mathews, 2012)	Apply vibrato technique to a piece of concert repertoire	Students will perform the first four measures of <i>Sinfonia in A Minor</i> (Figure 2.2) and add vibrato to the half notes in each measure	5 minutes

Table 2.6 Lesson Plan 4

a harmonic minor scale

$\text{♩} = 80$

Violin

Viola

Violoncello

Double Bass

Vn.

Va.

Vc.

D.B.

The musical score is for a harmonic minor scale in D minor, 4/4 time. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 80. The score is for Violin, Viola, Violoncello, and Double Bass. It shows the first four measures of the scale. The key signature has two flats (Bb and Eb). The scale is written in a four-part setting. The first measure starts on D4. The second measure has a half note D4 and a half note E4. The third measure has a half note F4 and a half note G4. The fourth measure has a half note A4 and a half note Bb4. The fifth measure has a half note C5 and a half note D5. The sixth measure has a half note E5 and a half note F4. The seventh measure has a half note G4 and a half note A4. The eighth measure has a half note Bb4 and a half note C5. The score includes fingering and bowing indications.

Figure 2.1 A Harmonic Minor Scale

4

Sinfonia

In A Minor

Georg Philipp Telemann
Arranged by Bob Mathews

Full Conductor Score
Approx. time – 2:00

Adagio ($\text{♩} = 62$)
Allegro ($\text{♩} = 84-92$)

Violins
Viola
Cello
String Bass

f

slow bow

3-4

L2

L1

Am D#7 B7/F# E

1/2 Am Gm/A

Figure 2.2 Excerpt from *Sinfonia in A Minor*

My goal with teaching these lessons was to introduce vibrato to second year players and have them begin to develop the technique as a means of further advancing their technical abilities. I made sure to try to keep the students playing the same notes at the same time. In the concert repertoire excerpt (Figure 2.2), the cello part is in third position to avoid the use of the open A string. I took this as an opportunity to have all the students performing vibrato in third positions and tie it to our discussion and teachings of finger patterns. The students learned how to correctly develop the vibrato motion first without the instrument and then with the instrument. The students then learned how to vibrato each finger individually, then go from one finger to another while using vibrato. This is the reason for the four-finger patterns in third position and

then first position. Most of the instruction was given directly from me in the form of demonstrations and rote teaching. In the beginning I used mostly visual and auditory observations to assess how the students were doing with the exercises. This helped me to know what needed to be retaught and how much time the students would need to practice the exercises before moving on to the next portion of the lesson. As the lessons progressed, I began to use rubrics that had more specific explanations of what was being assessed (Table 2.3 Rubric 1, Table 2.5 Rubric 2). The students also assessed themselves on the 1-5 scale. This was helpful for me because I was able to determine how they were feeling about the process and used that to continue to develop the next steps.

In the future, I want to find ways to have the students more involved with the process instead of all the instruction coming directly from me. I will also be using more scales and etudes to further develop use of vibrato with my classes. As this group goes through eighth grade continuing to develop their vibrato skills, I will be using more formal assessments in the form of video assignments where students will be recording themselves playing a scale or a passage of a piece of music using vibrato and a rubric like the ones I have provided will be used. This will help to give feedback to the students individually, whereas the feedback was full group based for these lessons. This instruction expanded my thinking and enhanced my teaching practice by continuing to develop the curriculum for my orchestra program, specifically the second year of instruction. This was a good opportunity to begin to develop vibrato and shifting for young musicians. This process also enhanced my teaching by doing something that was new for me and pushed me outside of my comfort zone.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

When I came out of my undergraduate and began my first job, I felt that I had been adequately prepared to take on an orchestra teacher role. I then jumped into a 6-12 orchestra program, and I realized there was more that I needed to learn. I decided in 2020 that I needed to do more with my education and my career. I began looking for schools and programs to pursue. I did some research on many schools, but I ultimately decided to pursue the summer program at Kansas State because of the reviews that I got about the faculty and the program from others. I had also met a couple of the professors through different events over the years such as Dr. Dirks and I looked up to her and knew that she would be a great teacher. I began my graduate studies in the summer of 2021.

Every course I have taken at K-State has influenced my thinking and decision making when it comes to teaching. There has been at least some influence on the way that I teach my classes and run my orchestra program from every course. The classes that made the biggest difference for me were my pedagogy classes. From the upper and lower strings pedagogy classes, I further developed not only my teaching skills and abilities, but also my skills as a musician. There were things about my primary instrument that I learned from Dr. Cooper that I had not learned in my undergraduate or in my first few years of teaching. The pedagogy class with Dr. Dirks was game changing for me. I feel that I have a much better understanding of setting cello and bass players up for success when beginning my class. The readings of Phyllis Young really changed how I go about teaching beginning cello and bass students. Her strategies for beginning position and bow holds for cello and bass players have been very helpful in how I develop my beginning students. I plan to use more of her techniques throughout the next year. I have noticed such a change in the way that my cello and bass players develop correct posture,

hand positions and bow hold from the beginning of the year. Exercises and games like “Around the Bend and down a Gentle Slope” is just one that I have used to help my students when developing early use of the bow (Young & Blakemore, 2009).

I have also discovered ways to help my students that are not beginners to advance and grow in their musicianship and leadership. I am excited to be giving more student leadership opportunities next year, including section leaders. A lot of what I know now came from the Organization and Administration of the Successful Music Program course with Dr. Dirks. There was so much that I did not know or think about in detail until I took this course. With the feedback and support I received from not only Dr. Dirks, but my classmates as well, I have been doing a lot better with recruiting and retaining students as well as advocating for my program.

One of the most thought-provoking courses would have to be Symphonic Literature with Dr. Dirks. Many of our discussions were centered around inclusion and diversity when it comes to music selection. I was not fully prepared for where some of those discussions would go. I was very naïve, and I had a lot to learn. One such conversation about a certain piece of music lead to me sending a message through social media to a well-known composer and arranger to inquire about decisions she had made when naming the piece. I do not think I would have ever done that on my own. Since taking that course, I have been paying a lot of attention to pieces that I chose for my orchestras. Looking further into the historical and cultural aspects of pieces and who is writing them has not only expanded my horizons when it comes to picking music, but also ensuring that I am appropriately representing and teaching of cultures different than mine in my classroom.

The courses that surprised me the most were the ones with Dr. Payne. While I admit, I have always struggled with researching, analyzing data, and presenting the findings and it has

never been something that has been interesting to me, Dr. Payne presented it in a way that was very interesting and approachable for me. The Curriculum Development/Learning Assessment class was also very fun and informative. The project that was done at the end of residency where we created a new class syllabus and assessment tools was a great project. I created one that I was excited to get potentially to teach in high school one day, but I accepted a middle school teaching job the day that I presented that project. Through that class, I feel more confident in developing a curriculum and mapping out what I want my students to learn when they are in my class. My program structure is changing in this next year to be structured into beginning, intermediate and advanced classes. With this development, I am using what I learned to continue to develop the curriculum for the intermediate and advanced classes.

The History and Philosophy of Music Ed course was of the most interesting and influential classes that I have taken. Reading about other music philosophies and writing my own teaching philosophy has helped me to realize what is important to me when it comes to music education and education in general. I have always had my thoughts and opinions about education, but it was very interesting to read the perspective of others, even if I did not agree with them.

When I decided that I was going to start this program at K-State, I knew that I was going to get new rehearsal techniques, continue to develop my skills as a conductor, read about music education philosophies and write a lot of papers. What I did not realize was how much I was going to change and develop as an educator. I have learned how to control the things that I can and how to use my voice to either ask for help or advocate for my students and myself. I am grateful for my professors and classmates that have worked with me and taught me over the last four years.

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