

**Improvement of rhythm sight-reading through the use of the
Eastman Breath Impulse method**

by

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Abstract

The lessons included in this report focus on the use of the Eastman Breath Impulse Method in order to improve my concert band's sight-reading skills. This method breaks rhythms down into beat notes and pulse notes. The beat note is the type of note that receives the beat as dictated by the bottom number of the time signature, and the pulse note is the subdivision. In my lessons, the beat note was the quarter note and the pulse note was the eighth note. Besides highlighting the subdivisions within notes, this method also helps to establish the connection of the pulsing of the eighth note with the tapping of the foot. This is just another reinforcement of the pulse and subdivision. As a class we went through a variety of rhythms using this system, beginning with how to write the counts and breath impulse markings underneath the notes, clapping and counting rhythms, then sizzling them with the pulses while fingering the notes, and finally playing them. Both the students and I noticed improvement in their rhythm reading skills by applying this method.

Throughout my coursework during my Master's degree program, I have learned of various techniques and methods in order to improve my ensembles' overall music skills. Although I had a strong foundation from my undergraduate degree, several of my classes have caused me to reflect on how I can be more effective in my instruction in order to create more self-sufficient musicians. For example, a good amount of time was spent in my Advanced Rehearsal Techniques course on how to shape our warm-up time in order to not only get students focused and physically ready but to also teach content and skills that will then be applied to the literature. My implementation of the Eastman Breath Impulse Method is a direct result of this as I continue to find techniques that will more effectively teach my students the skills that they will carry forward into the rehearsals of our concert literature. This course along with several others

have also made me reflect on how I can be more efficient in my teaching and organization.

Rather than taking on all responsibilities myself, I have discovered and learned ways to not only lessen my load but to also give more people ownership and responsibility for our program and accomplishments. This has obviously caused me to be less stressed but also strengthens the commitment that the other members have to the ensemble. Overall, I have developed into a more effective, efficient, calm, collected, and engaging educator as a result of my Master's program.

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Education in the United States serves many purposes, both socially and individually. In order for a society to truly prosper, I believe that it must invest in its citizens. Public education is the ultimate investment. It is one of the few institutions that one's socio-economic status, skin color, class, abilities or disabilities, or connections do not matter. It is for everyone, which is vitally important to its worth. Of course, some schools are more successful than others in terms of academic achievement and rigor for a variety of reasons, but the fact that ANYONE who is of school age can attend a public school in America and receive its services is one of its greatest values. It means that at our core, we as a country believe in the worth and the potential of our youth.

Ultimately, I believe education is for the betterment of people. It expands people's outlooks and exposes them to a wealth of knowledge, both social and academic, that they would otherwise not experience. Trained professional teachers impart knowledge and reach young people's minds to expand their understanding and views of the world. Through the educational process, students are able to evaluate and reflect on what is happening around them. The old saying "Those who do not learn history are doomed to repeat it" holds significant value and truth in the role of education. It is an ever-evolving, socially responsive system driven by research and an innate desire to positively impact as many people as possible. It is one of the most significant and truest democratic elements that our nation has achieved, and something that should be protected.

Academically speaking, as different areas of students' brains are developed through education, skills such as critical thinking, reason and logic are expanded. These abilities are crucial to solve problems and develop new ideas for the improvement of society and the world.

We need our public to be educated in order to promote advancement in all fields. Knowledge is power, and a better future starts with developing the minds of our youth.

The improvement of people that education provides not only involves academic intelligence, but also social. When students from different backgrounds and experiences come together inside schools, social interactions lead to better understandings of people. One of the best choices I ever made was to leave the small, middle class Kansas school system that I grew up in to enroll in a majority low income, urban high school. At 16, I had enough insight to know that I needed to develop more empathy and the ability to work with people outside of my comfort zone. Of course, this exposure varies from school to school, district to district, but happens at some level in every classroom. Gaining insight into the minds and lives of other people helps promote a culture that values others and makes the act of collaboration out in the real world far less daunting.

In addition, the American education system is crucial in providing social services to children. Students and families rely on the school to provide important basic human services such as healthcare, nutrition, physical activity, mental health assistance, and much more. Unfortunately, we have come to expect the educational system to provide too much of our societal needs. This has become even more apparent with the COVID-19 pandemic. Many have equated these reasons with the same importance as academic progress in their push for reopening schools this fall. Without the public school education system, the overall well-being of many children have and will continue to decline drastically. Although I believe that school systems are responsible for too much of children's welfare, I am thankful that public education provides such services that would otherwise not be addressed for many young people.

Despite the overwhelming responsibilities put upon our educational system, there are things that we are doing correctly in order to accomplish our purposes and goals. The inclusion of arts in the curriculum, especially music, is one such example. This subject area develops both cognitive and affective skills, and connects people across cultures, ages, and backgrounds. It is hard to imagine school without music programs, as they contribute not only to the students directly involved in them, but also to the overall spirit and inclusiveness of the entire body. Music education improves the lives of students, and reactively, improves the lives of those around them.

One way in which music education does this is through emotional development and healing. Music is amazing at developing people's emotional intelligence. The act of listening or creating music can be deeply personal and introspective. For many of my students, music is an escape – a place for them to stop thinking about the problems and worries of their personal lives and lose themselves in something that brings them great pleasure. They leave their emotional baggage behind and invest in their own contentment and well-being. I know that this is certainly true for me, as I have had no greater joy than making music with others. I would not have had the chance to experience such bliss if not for my involvement in music education, both as a student and teacher. When so much of our educational system is focused on statistical results and scientific verification, music provides the chance for students to explore and accept their own thoughts and feelings. Affective knowledge is just as important as academic, and music education expands this knowledge. Music classes provide students with opportunities for exploration of their own thoughts and feelings, leading to well-adjusted adults.

The understanding of emotions that music allows expands beyond the examination of our own feelings, but also the awareness of others. Within a music classroom, there is constant

communication between players and discussion of the mood or message of a piece. They are asked to work together to create a personal work of art, which can only be accomplished when everyone fully commits. When students are engaged in something that is so personal to them while also relying on others who feel the same connection, it is easy to see why they develop more of an emotional understanding of their fellow musicians. As the philosopher Christopher Small (1998) so eloquently articulated, “The act of musicking, in its totality, itself provides us with a language by means of which we can come to understand and articulate those relationships and through them to understand the relationships of our lives” (p. 14). Music education provides the opportunity for anyone and everyone in public schools to develop and understand others through the development of their emotional intelligence.

Arts education, including music, have a special way of making everyone feel valued. These classes reach an assortment of kids, and unites them with others who share their interests. I can’t count how many times students have told me they feel a great sense of community and belonging in their arts classes that they don’t experience anywhere else. I believe this is connected to the affective capacity of the arts, but also because these classes seem to attract students that are otherwise “outliers” within the school. A sense of open mindedness and compassion permeates in many of these classrooms and creates a safe space for students who otherwise would feel unwelcome. These are the classes that motivate students to attend school and be successful in other aspects of their lives.

In my classroom, I highly believe that music and music education is for all. I want everyone in my ensembles, not only the ones who are the most talented. For me, music is in all of us. Levels of natural talent vary, but each student’s skill level is just a reflection of his/her musical development. While I appreciate my students who come in with a high level of skill, I

see great potential in all of my students. Music's value extends to everyone, not just those who have a natural aptitude.

Music classes, especially in performance-based classes such as concert band, orchestra, and choir, are perfect tools for teaching teamwork. In what other subject does a student's individual ability and contribution prove to be so critical to the overall success of the group? Every single person's part is valuable and does not only impact his/her performance. Significant progress is made when people work together, and this is constantly practiced in these ensembles. Ensemble classes teach not only accountability, but also the importance of working as a team.

Furthermore, music contributes greatly to education through its cognitive complexity and value. Many studies have shown the cognitive benefits of music education, as it engages several different parts of the brain simultaneously. Consider everything that is happening while a student is performing a piece on his/her instrument. He/she is reading the music and interpreting a very specific notation which engages tactile, emotional and cognitive skills. The written notation tells the student what breath control is required, how to articulate it with the tongue, what fingers to push and at what time, all at a particular rate or beat. Specified technique is always evaluated as he/she practices proper hand position and embouchure while playing. The student must listen to everyone else's part in order to create a unified sound while watching a conductor and making interpretive decisions based on the conductor's hand movements, what he/she is hearing within the ensemble, and the written notation. This creation and collaboration is engaging the student's emotional centers concurrently. The brains of these students look like an electrical storm when performing, their neurons creating and strengthening pathways across the different lobes of the brain (Schlaug, 2015). The more interaction and depth of study, the wider and deeper the

cognitive benefits. This means that music education should extend from elementary school through secondary school for students to gain the most benefit.

The extreme exercising of the brain involved in the arts (including music) is often overlooked, simply because so much of the education system relies on linguistic knowledge. Education philosopher Elliot Eisner (1991) outlined this perfectly,

My work in the arts as a painter made it perfectly clear that cognition, by which I mean thinking and knowing, is not limited to linguistically mediated thought, that the business of making a picture ‘that works’ is an awesome cognitive challenge, and that those who limit knowing to science are naïve about the arts and, in the long run, injurious to the children whose educational programs were shaped by their ideals (p. 13).

Just because the arts are interpretive and not scientifically based does not mean that they are not cognitively demanding. Knowledge can be demonstrated in a multitude of ways, and music is a perfect example of this.

In summary, our public school system should require students to engage in a multitude of subjects in order to create well-rounded citizens. The inclusion of music education in the curriculum is a significant component of a comprehensive, rigorous education. It assists in emotional development and exploration, promotes teamwork and collaboration, fosters inclusiveness and empathy, and is cognitively demanding. The arts teach parts of the mind that are otherwise not addressed in education and are an essential part of creating productive members of society. Although skeptics often look to these programs when considering budget cuts and time constraints, it would be a huge disservice to our children to deprive them of the knowledge and experience that these classes provide.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

Music is for all and I want all of my students to be able to independent musicians. While some received varying degrees of education on the Eastman Breath Impulse system from their middle school teachers, not all were taught it well or to its full value. I know that all of my students are capable of learning and using this method to improve their rhythm skills, which was my goal of this lesson. Another important part of my philosophy that is demonstrated in my lessons is the importance of teamwork. I used section leaders to help check written in counts and answer any questions which helped foster teamwork within my classroom. I believe this feeling of community is a significant part of what music classes have to offer.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plans

Lesson Plan 1

Kansas Music Standards

This lesson addresses the following standards from the Kansas Music Educators Association [KMEA] (2005) standards for secondary ensembles.

Pr.5.3.E.5a Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensembles performances of a varied repertoire of music.

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Most students should have a knowledge of the Eastman Breath Impulse method as it is the required system to teach rhythm in my school district's beginning band programs.

Rehearsal Objective

To assess students' sight-reading ability and discover what they think cause any of their own weaknesses.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

- Informal assessment of what I hear and see while students play
- Have students fill out Sight Reading Pre-Assessment
- Use this data and my own informal assessment of hearing them play to guide future instruction
 - Note reading (pattern and scale work)
 - Rhythm reading (rhythm drills)
 - Strategies for sight reading procedure

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Students are returning to in-person instruction after a previous fall semester of online instruction and a spring semester of no instruction. This was truly a reset year with many basic skills needing to be reviewed and practiced including simple rhythm. Students are behind in many musical concepts and skills of where they have been in past years.

The class has 48 students enrolled, varying in grade level from ninth to 12th. Two of these are English Language Learners and five are receiving special education services. Of these five, one has an IEP accommodation who I paired with another student within her same instrument group. The remaining four students had no relevant modifications/accommodations.

The school is on a block schedule meaning that we meet every other day for 80 minutes. Between the end of the week and the beginning of the next, I will not see my classes for four days due to the weekend.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The sight-reading examples were taken from the website www.johnmcallisttermusic.com in his “Sight-Reading Bootcamp” section. All instruments are playing unison in both pitch and rhythm. Below is example B for the flute.



Figure 2-1 Flute Part for “Example B” (McAllister, n.d., p. 10)

Students will fill-out the “Sight-Reading Pre-Assessment” that I created to identify weaknesses and struggles.

Name: _____

How did you do sight reading? Rate yourself.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>I was so lost!</i>		<i>Okay with a few mistakes</i>		<i>I NAILED IT!!!</i>

What did you find the most difficult? Circle one.

Rhythm	Notes	Putting both together
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What about the above did you find the most difficult? Is there a certain rhythm or note? Was it the tempo? Give me details!

Figure 2-2 Sight-Reading Pre-Assessment

Rehearsal Plan

Activity (Time)	Description

Music Distribution (2 minutes)	<i>Purpose:</i> Give students musical examples that they have not yet seen. <i>Sequence:</i> Pass out <u>Sightreading Bootcamp #2</u> packet <i>Assessment:</i> Have students raise their hands if they did not receive music.
Sight Reading Prep (1 minute)	<i>Purpose:</i> Give students an opportunity to quickly look over the sight-reading example. <i>Sequence:</i> Tell students to turn to example B. This example was chosen due to relevant components to our future piece “Torrents of Fire” such as the key of B-flat, dotted quarter note rhythms and a concert F#/Gb accidental. Give students one minute to familiarize themselves with example B using whatever sightreading procedure they would like to use and give them the tempo that we will perform it. The only stipulation is that they cannot make any sound on their instruments. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment as I walk around the classroom making sure students are on task.
Sight Reading (2 minutes)	<i>Purpose:</i> Test their own methods of sight-reading preparation to find out their weaknesses. <i>Sequence:</i> Sight-read example B at the given tempo. I merely conduct with some basic cues to guide them. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment to determine which rhythms they struggle the most within the example.

Self-Assessment (4 mins)	<i>Purpose:</i> Discover what students identify as their weaknesses when sight-reading. <i>Sequence:</i> Pass out “Sight-Reading Pre-Assessment” to each student. Allow 3-4 minutes for students to fill out the self-assessment. Communicate to them to put as much detail in their answers as possible. Once all students have finished, all papers are passed to the right for collection. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment as I walk around the classroom making sure students are on task.
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Table 2-1 Rehearsal Plan 1

Lesson Plan 1 Reflections

The goal of this lesson was to focus in on what specifically my students struggle with while sight-reading through student self-assessment. While I can try to diagnose the problem, why not just go straight to the source and ask? The results of the “Sight-Reading Pre-Assessment” identified that most students struggled with rhythm (25), followed by putting notes and rhythms together (13), and finally notes (10). The average score that students rated themselves was a 2.3. During my informal assessment of listening while the students performed example B, I noticed that most of the students were rushing through quarter notes. Also, students identified measures 16 and 20 specifically has being rhythmic challenging and both measures contain a dotted quarter note. I anticipate that pulsing the eighth note will help them hold both of these note types for their full value.

So much attention has been spent this year on smaller note values such as eighth, dotted eighth, and sixteenth notes that students tend to not focus on the longer notes. By highlighting

the eighth note subdivision I am hoping that students will give more attention to these longer notes and be more rhythmically accurate when coming off of them. While we constantly clap and count rhythms in class, we have not used the pulsing technique and highlighted the eighth note subdivision connection with the tapping of the toe. Fellow band teachers in my district have found success with this technique, so this is my strategy to help my students become more rhythmically accurate and independent.

Lesson Plan 2

Kansas Music Standards

This lesson addresses the following standards from the Kansas Music Educators Association [KMEA] (2005) standards for secondary ensembles.

Pr5.3.E.8a Develop strategies to address technical challenges in a varied repertoire of music and evaluate their success using feedback from ensemble peers and other sources to refine performances.

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

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Most students should have a knowledge of the Eastman Breath Impulse method as it is the required system to teach rhythm in my school district's beginning band programs.

Rehearsal Objective

To introduce/review the Eastman Breath Impulse system both in writing and execution, and to assess if this method helps students better perform longer notes such as quarter and dotted quarter notes.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

- Informal assessment of what I hear and see while students play
- Informal assessment by students showing number of eighth note subdivisions on their fingers
- Informal assessment of “thumbs up, thumbs to the side, or thumbs down” to check for understanding
- Informal assessment of hearing students clap and count different note values and then using the Eastman Breath Impulse system
- Have students fill out “Pulsing Self-Assessment”
- Use this data and my own informal assessment of hearing them play to guide future instruction
 - Note reading (pattern and scale work)
 - Rhythm reading (rhythm drills)
 - Strategies for sight reading procedure

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

Students are returning to in-person instruction after a previous fall semester of online instruction and a spring semester of no instruction. This was truly a reset year with many basic skills needing to be reviewed and practiced including simple rhythm. Students are behind in many musical concepts and skills of where they have been in past years.

The class has 48 students enrolled, varying in grade level from ninth to 12th. Two of these are English Language Learners and five are receiving special education services. Of these five, one has an IEP accommodation who I paired with another student within her same instrument group. The remaining four students had no relevant modifications/accommodations.

The school is on a block schedule meaning that we meet every other day for 80 minutes. Between the end of the week and the beginning of the next, I will not see my classes for four days due to the weekend.

Instructional Materials, Resources and Technologies

The whiteboard at the front of my room is used to review the eighth note subdivision for longer note values such as the quarter, dotted quarter, and half notes. Also at the front of the room is the document camera and screen that I use to display the correct counts and dash pulse marks for students to check their work.

The sight-reading examples were taken from the website www.johnmcallisttermusic.com in his “Sight-Reading Bootcamp” section (McAllister, n.d., p. 10). All instruments are playing unison in both pitch and rhythm. Below is example C for the flute.



Figure 2-3 Flute Part for "Example C" (McAlister, n.d., p. 10)

Students will fill-out the “Sight-Reading Pulsing Assessment” that I created to inform me if the Eastman Breath Impulse method helped them and what other strategies they have found helpful.

Name: _____

How did you do sight reading this time? Rate yourself.

1	2	3	4	5
<i>I was so lost!</i>		<i>Okay with a few mistakes</i>		<i>I NAILED IT!!!</i>

Did the pulsing help? Circle one.

YES NO

If not, why do you think that is? What other strategies have you used in your practice or performance that you think might be helpful? Give me details!

If yes, why do you think it helped? Give me details!

**Figure 2-4 Sight-Reading Pulsing Assessment
Rehearsal Plan**

Activity (Time)	Description
Eighth Note Subdivision Review (6 minutes)	<i>Purpose:</i> Review eighth note subdivisions in preparation for review/introduction of the Eastman Breath Impulse system and the connection of the tapping of their toes with the eighth note subdivision <i>Sequence:</i> On the whiteboard, review how many eighth notes are in a quarter, dotted quarter, and half note. Write in counts under the note values using numbers for the pulses and “te” for the up-beat. On the numbers, draw an arrow pointing down to show that this occurs when the toe hits the ground. On the “te” draw an arrow pointing up to show that this occurs when the toe goes up, dividing the beat in half.

	<i>Assessment:</i> Have students show me on their fingers how many eighth notes are in given note values. Clap and count the note values starting on beat one while tapping their toes and saying the eighth note subdivision.
Introduction/Review of Eastman Breath Impulse system – I Do, We Do (10 minutes)	<i>Purpose:</i> Demonstrate and implement the connection between the eighth note subdivision and the tapping of their toes and the use of the Eastman Breath Impulse system. <i>Sequence:</i> Using the note subdivisions and arrows already on the board, replace these subdivisions with dashes to represent the breath impulses. Demonstrate for the class the breath impulses on the quarter note, and then ask a student to demonstrate how this system would be applied to the other note values. Repeat this process using a sequence of note values/rhythms. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment as I walk around the classroom making sure students are participating. Also have checks for understanding throughout the process using thumb gestures: thumbs up=I understand, thumb to the side=I'm understanding but need more practice, thumb down=I'm lost.
Using the Eastman Breath Impulse system – You Do (5 minutes)	<i>Purpose:</i> Students begin to put the Eastman Breath Impulse system to use in order to improve their rhythmic sight-reading <i>Sequence:</i> Have students write in counts and dashes to represent the rhythmic pulses underneath example B (Figure 2-1) of the

	“Sight-Reading Bootcamp” packet. Once section leaders are done with their own examples, instruct them to go around their section to assist and check work. After students have completed their writing, they will begin to practice clapping and pulsing the example individually as everyone finishes. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment as I walk around making sure students are on task, answering questions, and checking work.
Practicing the Eastman Breath Impulse system – We Do (8 mins)	<i>Purpose:</i> Perform the Eastman Breath Impulse system to assist with rhythmic sight-reading <i>Sequence:</i> Using the document camera and screen at the front of the room, display the correct counts and dashes for example B. Have the students check their work and make any corrections. As a class, clap and say the pulses for example B, then sizzle it while pulsing and fingering along, and have the students play example B. <i>Assessment:</i> Aural assessment as the students demonstrate their understanding of the system.
Using the Eastman Breath Impulse system – You Do (8 mins)	<i>Purpose:</i> Assess students’ understanding and implementation of the Eastman Breath Impulse system. <i>Sequence:</i> Students repeat this process of writing in counts and pulse dashes on example C (in the key of a piece we will be sight-reading next rehearsal and in similar tempo, as well as

	contains quarter and dotted quarter note values), clapping and counting, sizzling and fingering along completely on their own. The class performs example C after this study period. <i>Assessment:</i> Aural assessment as the students demonstrate their understanding of the system.
Self-Assessment (4 mins)	<i>Purpose:</i> Have students reflect upon the Eastman Breath Impulse system both in its use and effectiveness <i>Sequence:</i> Pass out “Sight-Reading Pulsing Assessment” to each student. Allow 3-4 minutes for students to fill out the self-assessment. Communicate to them to put as much detail in their answers as possible. Once all students have finished, all papers are passed to the right for collection. <i>Assessment:</i> Visual and aural assessment as I walk around the classroom making sure students are on task.

Table 2-2 Rehearsal Plan 2

Lesson Plan 2 Reflections

The goal of this lesson was to review for some and teach others the Eastman Breath Impulse system both in writing and physical execution, implement it, and have the students assess its effectiveness on their sight-reading skills. There were multiple checks for understanding throughout the lesson and no students demonstrated that they were lost, only needing more practice or ready to move on. By breaking down note values through visual, aural, and kinesthetic processes I found that the Eastman Breath Impulse system engaged and reinforced the content for every learner.

The results from the “Sight-Reading Pulsing Assessment” solidified this finding. The average student self-assessment score was 4.2 and every single student confirmed that the use of this pulsing method helped them in their sight-reading. Reasons given included, “it helped me to not rush” to “I could better feel the pulse/beat while counting in my head.” As I know that this is only a small snapshot of this strategy’s effectiveness, I can confidently say that it is one I will continue to use in the future not only when sight-reading but also in dissecting rhythm in our repertoire. My goal is always to create more independent musicians who no longer need me to figure out musical notation and execution and this strategy will be one of many that I will use in pursuit of this.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

My time and energy spent in the Kansas State University Master of Music program brought about great reflection, change, and development. I am not the same teacher, nor the same person that I was at the beginning of this process. I have learned new methods, developed my teaching techniques, molded and solidified some of my beliefs, and become a more reflective educator and human being. Based upon all of these changes, I would say it was effort well spent.

The biggest change I experienced is my view of the role of a teacher. Although I have always appreciated my students and valued their thoughts, I believed my job was to be “the boss.” I was the giver of knowledge and because of this position, I was responsible for their learning. This was even worse in my first few years of teaching when I was trying to establish myself as the leader and trying to keep my head above water. Now, because of my teaching experience and studies in the Master’s program I think of my role differently. Not only do I not need to be in charge, but I want my students to no longer need me to continue their learning. I hope to produce life-long learners who do not become stuck when they don’t have someone to feed them new information or demonstrate a particular skill, but rather have learned the tools necessary to figure out problems and/or overcome obstacles. I am not the imparter of knowledge, but rather the person who helps them in their journey to becoming the best they can be in whatever they choose to pursue.

Another huge development that has occurred during my Master’s education is the recognition that I cannot do this job alone. As I learned in the Organization and Administration of School Music Programs course, not only is it okay for me to delegate responsibilities and let others take on more, it is actually beneficial for me and the program. By trying to do everything myself, I was burning out quickly and did not have much patience and understanding when

things did not go as planned. This also caused me to hoard the power rather than allowing my students to develop themselves and leaders and take more ownership over their groups. Today I take the time to invest in students leaders which leads to more investment and commitment from them, and more time for me to focus on other things that I could not dream of getting to before.

I would say the biggest shift in my thinking over these past three years is the value I put on judges' ratings. This was brought about due to the pandemic as I had to rework all of my teaching, but also from my philosophy and theory classes that were part of the KSU program as I reflected on what was truly important in my teaching. Am I in this profession to boost my own ego and measure myself and my students against others who have entirely different circumstances than me, or am I here for the experiences of the students and their growth?

Knowing that students do not grow at the same rates and come to me with such varied ability and knowledge levels, why do I put so much pressure on them and myself to impress someone who has no idea where we started at the beginning of the year and how far we have come? When I actually thought about it, this model was not serving me or my students. This competitive mindset does not motivate my students, but the sense of community and safety that our program does.

I came to this conclusion partly through the discussion of the Growth Mindset theory in my Theories of Music Education course. Teaching in a Title I school, my students face a variety of obstacles both in and outside of the band room walls. Many of these are outside of their control, therefore it is important for me to promote a mindset of capability and growth. Encouraging the process rather than the product is important to this theory, and one new strategy I learned is the Power of Yet. One simple word can redefine challenges, and this new way of thinking has been a powerful tool.

Another course that has had a significant impact on my teaching in a more practical way is Concert and Ethnic Percussion Techniques. In my undergraduate percussion technique class, I didn't know what I didn't know. There was so much to absorb about technique, and musical notation that I couldn't possibly retain it all. Now that I had been teaching for a few years, I really knew in what areas I was lacking and what I wanted to explore more. I really appreciated Dr. Gartner's approach of letting us guide the class of what we wanted to learn about. What could be the causes of that awful sounding snare drum and how do I fix it? What are some basic exercises I could give my students to get their drum rolls more even? What are some websites with quality percussion ensemble literature, including Cuban music? These are just some of the things that I was able to learn during this course that I have taken with me into my own teaching.

Arranging for Bands has been invaluable to me in my ensemble classes. Although going into the course I was quite intimidated, Dr. Wimmer broke down the information and presented it in a very logical and understandable way. I was reminded of basic principles in orchestration and arranging that helped me in selecting quality performance literature for my groups, score study, and gave me the confidence to start to arrange pieces for my ensembles. Immediately after this class I arranged a few stand cheers of more modern tunes that really excited my students, and I rearranged my school's fight song to make it more accessible and powerful. These arranging skills have made my students more engaged because they are able to play with the music that they are more connected to and has helped with my budget since I do not have to spend money on someone else's arrangements.

The Advanced Rehearsal Techniques course has given me a deeper insight of where I have become too comfortable and/or lacking in my teaching. Although I always try to give my best to my students, as time progresses it is only human to settle into certain routines. I am now

more aware of my habits, as well as which of these are serving and which are hindering my and my students' progress.

Included with the knowledge and skills I have gained, this entire process has made me a student again and reminded me what that is like. Sometimes we forget how difficult learning can be when we are the ones presenting the same information year after year, knowing it like the back of our hands. To be put back into the hot seat and have to feel that frustration, stress, and fear of the unknown has been great for me both as a person and a teacher. Having reminders of how difficult the learning process can be has only made me more understanding of how some of my students feel on a daily basis.

Overall, I feel as though I received the opportunity to dive deeper into gaps in my knowledge from my undergraduate coursework. There can only be so much fit into an undergraduate degree, and truthfully some of the gaps I didn't know were missing until I started teaching. I will say that I am glad that I taught for 10 years before starting this program so that I knew where the holes were and what I needed to seek out to become a better teacher. Although I assumed that I would have much to gain within my teaching content through the Kansas State University Master's Degree Program, I could not have imagined the way it has entirely reshaped my approach and beliefs about my role as an educator.

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