# Developing lifelong singers through exploration, performance, and reflection.

by

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#### A REPORT

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# **Abstract**

In my videos you will see three different lessons and two different grade levels. In lesson one, sixth grade students are learning about musical form and preparing to use Sound Trap to create an original composition in rondo form. Lesson two, my high school women's choir rehearsed and prepared for their state contest. The last video shows the women's choir discussing the Kansas State High School Activities Association State rubric and explaining what each category is and what they think it means. After the rubric was explained they listened to themselves perform, rated themselves and justified their ratings.

Kansas State University has exposed me to many teaching strategies and has helped me grow as an educator. The two major developments in my teaching have been the use of assessments in the classroom, whether it is peer assessment or self-assessment, and the approach I take to teaching new music. I have learned that I do not need to spoon feed my students new music. The moment that I relinquished control and allowed them to explore and make mistakes I began to see a higher level of accountability from them. My students have learned to be more independent by me stepping back and allowing them to grow as musicians and humans.

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# **Dedication**

To my wife, Brianna Boller, who has supported me through this process and pushed me to succeed. To my parents, Tim and Cindy Boller, who have always pushed me to do my best and who instilled the love of music in me.

## **Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy**

## **Teaching Philosophy**

"A good teacher can inspire hope, ignite the imagination, and instill a love of learning."

(Henry 2014) This quote by Brad Henry is something that I have always believed since I became an educator. Teachers have the opportunity to take what they know and share it with young minds. However, they have to be willing and able to learn from each other and their students to make this happen. To be an effective teacher we have to understand what we believe in regards to general public schooling, your content area, and how they are intertwined. When looking at my philosophy I think back to what teachers were effective due to not only showing a passion for what they did but they were also willing to connect and relate to their students. Traditional schooling has been going on for hundreds of years but the problem that we see is that not much has changed in the ways that we teach students.

The arts are an area that has always tried to help students learn to be better people and teaches them how to deal with day to day issues. Music has been around since the beginning of time and will continue to be around until the world is gone. We hear music almost anywhere we go, the mall, the elevator, car, people walking around with earbuds in, etc. so it is easy to say that music is part of our lives, but how is music part of the formal schooling system? In our society today, music in some schools is still thought of as an elective, it is a place where we can just place kids that have nowhere else to go or just need a class to be part of. Fortunately, this is not how my school operates and I hope that many schools, if they do operate that way, can look at changing for the better. Now that the National Association for Music Educators has been pushing for music to become a core class we can finally see that people are starting to realize that there is an importance and relevance to music. One of the things that I love most about my choir class is

that most students come there because it is their one place they feel safe and happy. This is where formal schooling is not seeing the potential of music. Many time students deal with 50 math problems, a five-page paper for English, a multi-page lab write up in science, but when they come to music it is all in class work towards the same goal. Music builds a sense of comradery among students who normally would not even be seen in the same room together because of either social circumstances or socioeconomic reasons. For a normal school setting it should be a precedent to have music and arts be a focus of their schooling to really help students be able to express themselves in many different ways. Eisner states that music forms multiple intelligences and allows them to problem solve without having strict guidelines (Eisner 2002 p. 8). This gives us a chance to help students understand that we all are working towards the same goal but there are many ways to achieve that goal were as in math you have a problem and usually there is only one formulaic solution to get to the end result. As we see music right now many institutions view it as an aesthetic to entertain parents and other students and I do not necessarily disagree. Music is a performance-based class that does entertain a variety of people in many locations but there is much more that music can do for the students and the listener.

Due to the way formal schooling is set up now performance is a main focus of many music classrooms. Unfortunately, this is how we try and prove that we are doing a good job. Much of what we do as music teachers is making sure that the public, parents, and administration see that kids are performing well but is that really what we should be focusing on? When we focus on an arts-based education we focus more on creating productive members of society through the study of music. To me this would be a complete flip to how we do it now. When we are teaching in our music classrooms we have to make sure we incorporate other subjects but what would it be like if math, science, English, and history had to incorporate music to meet all

their goals. Like Eisner said with the arts forming multiple intelligences we have the chance to cultivate those through the study of music. I am as guilty as the next person when it comes to not looking as in depth at music as we should but this is something that I think is lacking in many programs. The reason many of us do not focus on this aspect is due to time. We are always working towards a deadline and end goal but my goal this year is to try and work towards a stronger education and not worry so much about the end result and focus more on the process. When students start to really look at why a song sounds a certain way or what the text truly means, they are learning to problem solve as a group and learning to work together towards one goal. There are many times I choose pieces that relate to my class to help them build a connection to what they are singing which will hopefully lead to a stronger performance. There are many different levels to what is going on in the music while we teach. We can choose to focus on theory, text, expression, melodic notation, and many other musical concepts. This instantly shows us that we have the sources we just have to use them to reach our students and build a foundation of musical knowledge to help grow their basic knowledge.

The last part of my music philosophy I want to look at is how music is relevant to today's educational and emotional needs. As a music director I feel it is our priority to always have high expectations for our music program because all students can be part of the experience. When I think about high expectations in my classroom really it boils down to behavior and how we treat other people. I hope that every student that passes through my door understands that no matter their background they are welcome and that I encourage and expect students to treat each other with the same respect. When it comes to high expectations during rehearsal, my biggest goal is to not let them sing or perform something incorrectly. The way that I show this is by stopping them and having them help me decide what was wrong so that they are constantly listening and

thinking about what they are doing. I also am a huge supporter of not giving credit unless credit is due. My students know that I will only give them credit for doing something right, I am not going to lie to them when it is not correct or good quality music. By helping my students understand that I will keep it real holds them to a higher standard because they are wanting earn a compliment and grow in their musical ability. To keep students engaged you have to keep them working, even your lower level learning students will keep up because of the teamwork that happens during rehearsal. I feel that music also has the impact to connect students from different backgrounds because of the options of music and topics we can sing and discuss. It allows students from many different backgrounds to participate in one goal together without any limitations to the final goal. To make this successful you as the teacher have to establish a strong relationship with all of your students and be able to relate to what they are going through throughout the school year. There are many times I feel more like a therapist because students trust me enough to come and express their problems just because I will listen to them. By being their therapist, I am gaining a level of trust and this will push them to work harder for me in the classroom. Students deal with so many issues now and it is our goal to hopefully help them forget about their problems or learn how to deal with them through the study of music. This is what I think makes us affective instructors and allows us to reach to a variety of students from your jock to your nerd to the kid who does not talk to anybody but loves to sing. Music is an amazing experience that is available to all students and when they learn to look past just the simple action they can take away so much more.

I believe that music education is for all students, it creates a place where students can problem solve without limitations, it connects students from many different cultural backgrounds, and creates a sense of family through team building and understanding how each

part works together. This is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their understanding through authentic performance rather than written evidence (Grave, 2016 p. 6). Music should be a part of the formal school curriculum because it gives students another place to express themselves in different forms whether it be playing an instrument, singing in choir, singing/playing a solo, or composing/arranging.

# How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

When writing my lessons plans I took into consideration that I want all students to experience music without limitations, create a sense of family, and to keep it relevant. When working on the creating aspect of this paper I wanted to give them an opportunity to create with only one limitation, composing in Rondo form, but the rest would be up to what they like and how they feel. In regards to the sense of family, I have worked hard the past couple years on changing how I approach and teach many different aspects of choir but also allowing them to give input on what they heard and how can we fix it. The responses sometimes are more fun than me just telling them what and how to do certain things. Music will always remain a way to connect students emotionally to the world around them. When picking music for these lessons I wanted music that they would connect to and put more than just their voices in. We spent many days talking and crying about situations that relate to what they were singing.

## **Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)**

# **Lesson Plan for Video 1 - Creating**

**Objectives:** Students will understand and be able to identify and label different types of musical form.

## **Standards Being Addressed:**

**MU:Cr2.1.C.IIIa** Assemble and organize multiple sounds or extended musical ideas to create initial expressive statements of selected extended sonic experiences or abstract ideas.

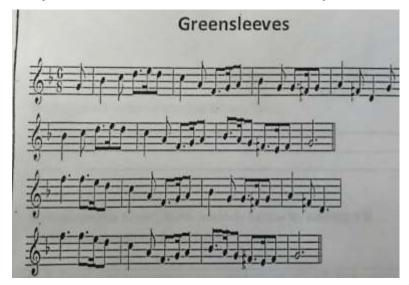
**MU:Cr1.1.5a** – Improvise/create rhythmic melodic, and harmonic phrases within AB and ABA forms.

**Materials of Instruction:** Form worksheet (Fig. 1), computer, projector, speakers, and access to YouTube.

# Binary (AB)

"Greensleeves' is in Binary form.

Can you label the two sections, A and B correctly?



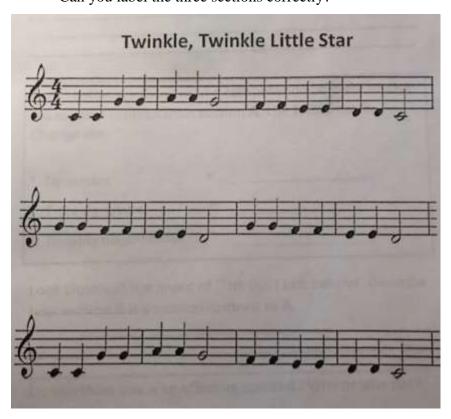
# **Binary Form Review**

Explain Binary form by drawing images/symbols.

In your own words describe Binary form.

# Ternary (ABA)

'Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star' is in Ternary form. Can you label the three sections correctly?



| In your own words describe Ternary form.            |   |
|---|---|
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
| T:  | under an dien De maniert en deutsche Green and dien   |
| Listed below are three ways a composer could r      | nake section <b>B</b> a musical contrast from section |
| A. List THREE more.                                 |   |
| Change the:   |   |
| 1)Dynamics  | 4)  |
| 2) Time Signature                                   |   |
| 5)  |   |
| 3) Tonality major/minor                             |   |
| 6)  |   |
| Rondo For   |   |
| Explain Rondo form by drawing images/symbol         | ls.   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
|   |   |
| In your own words describe Rondo form.              |   |
|   |   |
| Listen carefully to The Turkish March also know     |   |
| How many different sections can you hear?           |   |
| Using the letters A, B etc. can you write out the o | order of sections as they appear in The Turkish       |
| Rondo?  |   |

Figure 1. Form Worksheet

## Lesson Sequence (lessons may have more or less activities as appropriate):

#1 – Students will be given the worksheet that coincides with the PowerPoint presentation.

#2 – We will work through the presentation discussing:

- a) What is musical form?
- b) Different Types of musical form.
  - a. AB
  - b. ABA (Binary Form)
  - c. ABACA (Ternary Form)
  - d. ABACABA (Rondo Form)
- c) Project guidelines

Closure/Summative Assessment: Assessment for this lesson will be the complete worksheets.

During this lesson my goals were pretty straight forward. I knew going into this project that they would need a foundation in form and structure to help make it easier to complete the assignment. My only goal was that they would able to identify and understand what musical form is. The students learned about a variety of forms but focused on binary, ternary, and rondo which is what their project will entail. To help make this lesson more successful I supplemented each major form with a worksheet that had listening examples as well as music for them to physically mark each section (see figure 2.1). When assessing this lesson, I looked at their work on the worksheets and then their completed project towards the end. If I continue to use this lesson I would like to add more listening examples and maybe even find a website where they can move the form around from well-known songs and see how shifting one or two sections can change the entire sound of the composition. This instruction expanded my thinking by getting out of my normal routine of just giving them the project and spoon feeding them. This allowed the students to comprehend form before even thinking about composition and also engaged their listening skills, which we can always find ways to enhance, in the choral classroom.

# **Lesson Plan for Video 2 - Performing**

2014 Music National Standards:

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

MU: 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 source to refine performances.

Name: Sean Boller

**Prior Knowledge/Skills** (What do already know and can do?):

Students have learned notes and rhythms for the two songs.

**Rehearsal Objective** (What will your students be able to do as a result of this rehearsal *with you*?)

Working to clean up some rhythmic and musical issues within *Yo le Canto and Paper Crane*. In the video you will see the work on Paper Crane, talking about vowel placement and some musicality issues.

**Assessment of the Rehearsal** (How will *you* know if your *students can do* what they need to?)

Assessment will be completed, i.e. self-assessment while we watch the video.

#### **Relevant Contextual Factors:** Modifications/Accommodations needed:

| 17 Women grades 9-12. Meets every day | None |
|---------------------------------------|------|
| starting at 7:55 for 50 minutes.      |      |
|                                       |      |

Instructional materials, resources, &

#### **Personal Improvement Objective:**

Technology:

| Octavos | Trying to get away from the physical copy of |
|---------|--|
|         | music and work on being present and in the   |
|         | moment.                                      |

**Rehearsal Plan** (A step by step plan for the rehearsal - with timing - that leads to your objective.)

| <u>Time</u> | Activity | <b>Purpose of Activity</b> | <u>Sequence</u>    | Assessment                |
|-------------|----------|----------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| 5           | Sight    | To grow their              | N/A                | N/A                       |
| min         | singing  | understanding and          |                    |                           |
|             |          | knowledge of sight         |                    |                           |
|             |          | reading.                   |                    |                           |
| 10          | Warm-up  | Varied warm-ups to         | Stretch            | N/A                       |
| Min         |          | wake up the mind,          | Breathing activity |                           |
|             |          | body, and voice.           | Rhythm Activity    |                           |
|             |          |                            | Varied Vocal       |                           |
|             |          |                            | Warmups            |                           |
| 20          | Yo le    | Cleaning rhythmic          |                    | N/A                       |
| min         | Canto    | claps, vowels, and         |                    |                           |
|             |          | consonants.                |                    |                           |
| 10          | Paper    | Working on                 |                    | Self-assessment at end of |
| min         | Crane    | musicality and vowel       |                    | class. (Figure 2)         |
|             |          | placement.                 |                    |                           |

# **Self Assessment**

|  | 1          | 2 3 | 4       | 5   |                       |       |
|--|------------|-----|---------|-----|-----------------------|-------|
| Not in the moment  | $\bigcirc$ |     |         | Com | pletely focused       |       |
| Notes Correct  |            |     |         |     |                       |       |
| Mark only one oval.  |            |     |         |     |                       |       |
|  |            | 1 2 | 3 4     | 5   |                       |       |
| There were a lot of e  | rrors (    |     |         |     | All notes were correc | ct    |
| Rhythmic Accuracy<br>Mark only one oval.                     |            |     |         |     |                       |       |
|  | 1          | 2   | 3 4     | 5   |                       |       |
| Lots of errors in rhyt                                       | m (        |     | 00      |     | All rhythms correct   |       |
| Confidence<br>Mark only one oval.                            |            |     |         |     |                       |       |
|  |            | 1 2 | 3 4     | 5   |                       |       |
|  |            |     |         |     |                       | singi |
| No confidence in sin   | ging (     |     | $\circ$ |     | Strong confidence in  | 2000  |
| No confidence in sing<br>Vocal Health<br>Mark only one oval. | ging (     |     | 0 0     |     | Strong confidence in  | 250   |

Figure 2. Self Assessment Form

During this rehearsal my goal was to clean up some vowel and rhythmic issues within *Yo* le canto todo el dia and Paper Crane. To enforce these goals, I included warm-ups and exercises

to emphasize rhythm, diction, clapping, and vowel shape. During the rehearsal I would also incorporate the warm-up back into what we were doing if the students were not giving the outcome that I wanted. Students learned what to listen for and ways to fix some mistakes they were making by utilizing techniques that were reviewed during warm-ups. The instructional strategies that I employed were kinesthetic and aural. After we completed sight singing we moved into a rhythmic exercise that included the rhythms that they clap in Yo le canto todo el dia. During warm-ups I included exercises that focused on vowels and diction and related them back to their music. To assess the students throughout the class I would ask questions to see if they knew why were doing this type of warm-up. I tried to find ways to relate it back to what they were doing so there would be a correlation later while they were singing. At the end of rehearsal students were given a self-assessment, see figure, to see if they accomplished the things we worked on throughout the rehearsal. Watching this video, I realized that my energy was not where I normally would have it and that is something that I need to be more consistent about. As I move forward I want to incorporate more warm-ups in the middle of rehearsal to keep the desired ideas and techniques fresh in their minds. I also want to always keep my energy level up to help keep them engaged and wanting to work even harder. Throughout this lesson I feel that I expanded my thinking and enhanced my teaching practice by trying to be more creative in my warm-ups to reinforce what they need to do during their singing. This is something that I have always known is important but never really pushed myself passed the point of comfort and this was something I was working on throughout the school year.

# **Lesson Plan Video 3 - Responding**

2014 Music National Standards:

MU:Re9.1.E.lla – Evaluate works and performances based on research as well as personally- and collaboratively- developed criteria, including analysis, interpretation, of the structure and context.

MU:Pr5.3.E.5a - Use self-reflection and peer feedback to refine individual and ensemble performances of a varied repertoire of music.

Name: Sean Boller

**Prior Knowledge/Skills** (What do already know and can do?):

Students have learned two songs for KSHSAA State large group. We have also talked about many of the terms on the rubric.

**Rehearsal Objective** (What will your students be able to do as a result of this rehearsal *with you*?)

Students will explain what the judges are looking for and what to listen for when they are critiquing their own singing.

Assessment of the Rehearsal (How will you know if your students can do what they need to?)

Assessment will be them filling out the rubric and rating themselves.

#### **Relevant Contextual Factors:** Modifications/Accommodations needed:

| 17 Women grades 9-12. Meets ever | y day None |
|----------------------------------|------------|
| starting at 7:55 for 50 minutes. |            |
|                                  |            |

# Instructional materials, resources, & Personal Improvement Objective:

## Technology:

| Recording device, speakers, pencil, KSHSAA | Trying to connect them more to what and why |
|--|---|
| Rubrics(Fig. 3)                            | we do what we do.                           |

| +                        | Appearance + - Stage Presence + - Facial Expression + - | OTHER SCORE | Section + - Ensemble + -  | BLEND SCORE | Section + - b  | BALANCE SCORE |                                      | NOTE ACCURACY SCORE | Individual + - Ensemble + -               | RHYTHMIC ACCURACY SCORE | Vowels + - Consonants + - Language + - Syllabic Stress + - | DICTION SCORE | Dynamics + - M Phrasing + - M Style + - M Appropriate Tempo + -       | EXPRESSION SCORE | Unison + - Intervals + - Chords + - Tonal Awareness + -             | INTONATION SCORE | Breath Mgmmt. + - Frocus + - Freedom + Resonance + -          | TONE SCORE |                  | School: |        |
|--------------------------|---|-------------|---|-------------|--|---------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------|---|-------------------------|--|---------------|---|------------------|---|------------------|---|------------|------------------|---------|--------|
| RATING TABLE:            | Outstanding   | 3           | Consistent blend within section<br>ensemble                     | 5           | Appropriate melodic and harmonic balance within and across ensemble  | 5             | Notes performed correctly            | 5                   | Rhythms performed correctly               | 7                       | Expressive use of the elements of diction                  | 10 9          | Musical, sensitive, artistic use of style, tempo, phrasing & dynamics | 15   14          | Pitch is well centered/needed adjustments made quickly              | 15 14            | Proper tone production in all ranges<br>and dynamic levels    | 15 14      | I<br>Outstanding |         | Date:  |
| III 37-52 Pts            |   |             |   |             |  |               |                                      |                     |   |                         | 17.5%  |               | 100   | 13 12            | 3555  | 13 12            |   | 13 12      |                  | y       | į.     |
| s V 8-20 Pts.            | Excellent   | 2           | Minor defects within section/<br>ensemble blend                 | 4           | Minor defects in melodic/harmonic balance within and across ensemble | 4             | Nearly all notes performed correctly | 4                   | Nearly all rhythms performed<br>correctly | 6 5                     | Strong use of the elements of diction with minor defects   | 8 7           | Frequent use of expressive elements                                   | 11 10            | Minor problems in certain ranges &/or<br>dynamic levels or passages | 11 10            | Tone production is affected in some ranges and dynamic levels | 11 10      | II<br>Excellent  |         | CHORAL |
| re)                      | Av  |             | Inconsistent ble  |             | Ensemble bala  |               | Inconsistent                         |                     | Inconsistent rh                           | 4                       | Inconsistent a<br>element                                  | 6             | 0 A   | 9                |   | 9                | Tone production   | 9          | Average          |         | RAL    |
| Signature of Adjudicator | Average   | 1           | Inconsistent blend within section/<br>ensemble                  | 3           | Ensemble balance is inconsistent                                     | 3             | Inconsistent note accuracy           | မ                   | Inconsistent rhythmic accuracy            | 3                       | Inconsistent application of the elements of diction        | 5             | Inconsistent use of expressive elements                               | 8 7              | Problems evident with some adjustments being made                   | 8 7              | Tone production is inconsistent                               | 8 7        | age              |         |        |
| cator                    |   |             | Frequent blend section/e  |             | Frequent   |               | Minima                               |                     | Minimal rhyth                             |                         | Minimal applic   | 4             | Minimal expres  | 6                | Numerous pr<br>minimal adjus  | 6                | Proper tone p   | 6          | 70               |         |        |
|                          | Poor  | 0           | ent blend problems within<br>section/ensemble                   | 2           | Frequent balance problems  | 2             | Minimal note accuracy                | 2                   | ythmic accuracy                           | 2                       | Minimal application of the elements of diction             | 3             | Minimal expression much of the time                                   | 5 4              | Numerous problems evident with minimal adjustments being made       | 5 4              | Proper tone production is seldom present                      | 5 4        | Poor             |         |        |
|                          | in  |             | Little evidence<br>within sec                                   |             | Little evider<br>ensem   |               | Lack of r                            |                     | Lack of rh                                |                         | -  | 2             |   | 3                | Undeveloped bei   | 3                | Proper tone pro   | 3          | Inef             |         |        |
| Signature of Adjudicator | ineffective   | 0           | Little evidence of appropriate blend<br>within section/ensemble | 1           | Little evidence of appropriate<br>ensemble balance                   | -             | Lack of note accucracy               | -                   | Lack of rhythmic accuracy                 | 1                       | Lack of articulation and technical skills                  | _             | Notes are performed with little expression                            | 2 1              | Undeveloped with no adjustments being made                          | 2 1              | Proper tone production is not evident                         | 2 1        | V<br>Ineffective |         |        |

Figure 3. KSHSAA Choral Rubric

**Rehearsal Plan** (A step by step plan for the rehearsal - with timing - that leads to your objective.)

| <u>Time</u> | Activity | Purpose of        | <u>Sequence</u>    | <u>Assessment</u>          |
|-------------|----------|-------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
|             |          | <u>Activity</u>   |                    |                            |
| 5           | Sight    | To grow their     | N/A                | N/A                        |
| min         | singing  | understanding     |                    |                            |
|             |          | and knowledge     |                    |                            |
|             |          | of sight reading. |                    |                            |
| 10          | Warm-up  | Varied warm-ups   | Stretch            | N/A                        |
| Min         |          | to wake up the    | Breathing activity |                            |
|             |          | mind, body, and   | Rhythm Activity    |                            |
|             |          | voice.            | Varied Vocal       |                            |
|             |          |                   | Warmups            |                            |
| 10          | Record   | Record both       |                    | N/A                        |
| min         |          | songs to listen   |                    |                            |
|             |          | and critique.     |                    |                            |
| 25          | Rubric   | Discuss what      |                    | Completion of rating sheet |
| min         |          | each of the       |                    |                            |
|             |          | categories means. |                    |                            |

This lesson was completely new for me because I stepped back and let them have some say and leadership in interpreting the rubric instead of me just telling them what it means. My goal for this was for the students to see what the judges are listening for and then to find ways to improve were they scored themselves lower. The students learned how the KSHSAA rubric breaks down and what the judges need to hear for them to be successful at contest. The only instructional strategies I employed was recording them singing and then handing out the rubric to allow them to listen and critique based on the given guidelines of the handout. To assess them I

listened to their definitions of each category and then how they judged themselves based off of what I would have judged them. I will continue to use this method but I would like to do it sooner in the year so students can already be thinking ahead to contest. I do not know why I waited so long to allow them to look at the rubric and break it down in their terms so they understand it more. This was another way that I tried to relinquish some control and let them take more ownership of their success. I think by giving more control to the students and looking at the rubric through their eyes expanded my thinking and enhanced my teaching practice by letting them assess and improve their performance.

#### **Chapter 3 - Reflections**

When starting my graduate program, I was nervous and excited for this next step in my education. I was grateful to have this opportunity but also extremely pleased with all the professors that I have come in contact with. The staff and faculty have not only always been there during the program but are also great resources and colleagues as we move on to the future. They are not only a support system but willing to listen and provide feedback to fix problems you may be dealing with. This is something that I have always tried to be for my students. Having the role models at Kansas State University just reinforced everything I have wanted to be for my students no matter how old they are or where they come from. The graduate program has shown me that we should care more about the students and the process then worry about the outcome. Music is here to help students become even better people than they are now and it is a source of emotional enjoyment and stress relief at times. Because of this program I have been able to dive deeper into music and found even more ways to engage my students.

When I was first teaching I would just go through the motions and hopefully get students to perform well and that is all I really cared about. This program helped me switch from just thinking of the outcome but how we get there. This thought process allowed me to try and experience many different teaching strategies and to implement activities and ideas from my graduate class. These ideas ranged from, more intense or involved warm-ups to finding more ways to involve my students in the learning process. Many classes throughout this program have allowed me to relinquish control.

Advanced Choral Conducting and Advanced Choral Rehearsal Techniques opened my eyes to see how much I was dropping the ball. The fall after my first summer I immediately started implementing more excises and skills to push my students but still keeping them

successful. One of the exercises that was extremely successful included a rhythm activity that not only utilized the brain and sight reading but involved the body in different actions or sounds. Dr. Yu has also shown us how to hold students accountable and make music relevant to their everyday lives. I always knew that this was something I could do and needed to do but did not know how to get there. Allowing students to have more input and decisions on how to fix problems and even giving them opportunities to tell me what the text means really made it more beneficial not only for me but the students as well. It not only has made learning music easier, it has helped students dive into the music more than they used to.

During Research in Music Education I took the opportunity to look at vocal health in the music classroom and how I can get students to understand the importance of taking care of their voice. As a singer I usually am conscious about the decisions and the strain that I may put on my voice. However, I never portrayed that importance or necessity to my students until I dove deeper into vocal health. While diving into vocal health I found more ways to talk about vocal abuse and what can actually happen. At times this would cause shock when they would get to see a picture of vocal damage such as polyps or nodes. Showing them pictures and the reality of what can happened helped me implement techniques and for them to buy into the concept. It pushed me to create a self-check form for students to keep track of what is going on with their voice during the rehearsal and ways to check yourself outside the music classroom, i.e. ball games, cheering, etc. Using information I received during my research helped them to be more accountable outside the classroom and to be more open to tell me what is going on when they sing.

As a middle school and high school choir director my class personalities vary from class to class but what has made it easier to transition has been the different theories we learned in

Theories of Music Education. Being exposed to each of the many teaching theories and understanding their perspectives has helped me to see how many different approaches I could take to better suit an individual, class or person. The theory I used the most was the brain-based learning by implementing brain breaks throughout the rehearsal. There were days when my sixth-grade boys would come in and until we did some form of brain break they would not focus to save their lives. A big concept of brain-based learning is the use of movement which I feel is a big part of how to connect musical ideas and concepts during rehearsal to give it more context and create a physical connection with a musical idea. Having the kinesthetic aspect of the learning environment not only engages the students but gives them a gesture that I can pull out later to reference a phrase or spot we worked on in rehearsal.

Another class that helped me with my sixth-grade class was Curriculum Development. During Curriculum Development we broke down the process of what needs to be taught to get your desired outcome. For our final project we had to create a curriculum which I created for my sixth-grade general music/choir which is the one I have always struggled with. Sixth-grade class is a general music and choir class. Most of the students that I received were either starting from square one or did not understand the basic concepts of solfegge or notes. When I had the chance to implement the curriculum I designed this year it not only kept me on track but it also kept my students on the right track for the class. During the process I found myself feeling more confident in what I was doing because teaching elementary or general music has always been a weakness of mine. I also was seeing more success from my sixth-grade students as they progressed through the year. Curriculum Development also helped me come up with ways to assess the choir class. In the past my assessment was only in the form of summative and how they would perform. With the help of this graduate class I created some peer and self-assessment

forms to utilize in my classroom throughout the year to help me keep students accountable and aware of what they are doing.

In conclusion, my experiences and interactions at Kansas State University will be something I will use the rest of my career. Not only from the knowledge gained from the classes but from the interactions with professors and fellow students. I feel that we learn the best by learning from others and trial and error. Kansas State has taught me to not be afraid to fail and to not be afraid to let my students fail. The process to get to the end result is much more rewarding then just worrying about the end product. The examples listed above are some of the ways that this graduate program has helped me become a better teacher. I am leaving feeling more confident in myself and in my skills to create and encourage lifelong singers.

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