

**Teaching small ensemble chamber playing in the large ensemble
rehearsal**

by

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Abstract

The lessons demonstrated in this report are focused on teaching small ensemble playing during the large group rehearsal setting. Playing in a small ensemble requires a different level of playing compared to playing in a larger ensemble. In many ways, it creates a better musician because of the attention to detail needed when only one player is assigned per part. The improvement in musicianship within the smaller ensembles can improve the musicianship when placed back in the larger ensembles. Many schools in our region have well-established small ensemble programs within their band programs. This was something I had yet to develop when I started this project. My outcome for this project was to help establish our small ensemble program by equipping our students with the skills needed to do this on their own next year, without having to go as extensively into the larger group demonstrations as we did with this project. My hope is to build confidence and leadership within my older students and have them pass down what they learned through this project to develop a successful and self-sustaining small ensemble program for years to come. We started by playing through each of the four parts of three different quartets in unison. I then split the band into thirds and assigned each a different quartet. Within each quartet, I assigned each student one of the four parts from their assigned quartet. They played through each part together in their small group, and eventually were able to play as a single player on each of the four parts. Throughout this process, I was teaching them the skills needed to play within a smaller group, and eventually, down to a quartet.

Over the course of my master's program at Kansas State University, I have developed and honed many areas of my music teaching. For starters, I developed my skills and understanding of research. While I spent time in my undergraduate studies developing skills in research, it was nothing compared to what I learned over the course of my time at KSU. I feel

more confident in searching for and finding materials for not only the courses I took, but also as an educator looking for ways to improve my craft. I also feel the courses I have taken have provided me with more confidence as a teacher. I feel a strength of mine as a teacher/educator has been my presence in front of my students. I have no problem getting in front of my students/ensembles. However, I feel I am providing better feedback for my students, have enhanced my conducting and rehearsing, and am helping develop musicians within a music program and not just “teaching band,” all because of the things I have learned at KSU. I know I still have not learned everything I can, but I know that going through my graduate studies has given me the passion to want to continue getting better, even as I finish up the work for my master's degree.

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Dedications

I have two dedications for this report. First and foremost, I would like to dedicate this to my wife, Michelle. You have been so supportive since I met you, and have always been there for me when I have needed help of any kind. You have pushed me to become a better teacher. You have always been flexible and understanding. Thank you is nowhere near enough for everything you have done for me. I Love You!

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Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Philosophy is a Greek word that originates from the words “philein sophia.” The prefix “phil” relates to love, while “soph” relates to wisdom. Those two are put together to give us a meaning for the word philosophy as “a lover of wisdom” (Wile, n.d.). Any topic or subject can have a philosophy: philosophy of science, philosophy of history, philosophy of religion, and the list goes on and on. Philosophy explores the “why” we do something. It creates a defense when our topic is being scrutinized. It gives us reasons for the importance of our subject. The following is my philosophy on education, music, and music education.

What is Education?

Going along with the history of words, “education” is derived from the Latin word “erudio,” which is defined with such words as instruct, cultivate, and refine (“Erudio,” 2023). As an educator, I believe these three words hold strong meanings regarding the purpose of education. Instruct: to give knowledge to. Cultivate: to foster the growth of. Refine: to improve by making small changes. We give knowledge to our students about different subjects. We foster their intellectual growth as humans. We look to improve their wisdom, skill, and abilities, even if it is little by little. These are all reasons why and how we educate our students.

We often think of education as the teaching that happens inside the four walls of a school building. While most of a child’s education is formal education inside a school, just as much education happens in the hallways, at recess, in the home, and within the community, to name a few. We will focus on the formal education system for all intents and purposes of this reflection.

Formal education will teach a broad range of subjects over many years to achieve a level of competence to become a contributing member of society. It also comprises developing the whole child, with a focus on emerging as a contributing member of the society or environment in

which they reside. No one would disagree that formal education, whether public school, private school, or homeschool, is essential for all children. This reflection will not discuss which type of formal education system best suits children. The formal education system may look different from culture to culture, but there is some formal process of teaching and learning happening around the world. These subjects and competency levels may differ from school to school, town to town, state to state, country to country, and culture to culture. I believe formal education should include many subjects, including math, reading, writing, science, history, civics, economics, physical education, and the arts, both visual and performing arts, to create a well-rounded education. With the increasing reliance on technology, many schools also require courses in technology. Many schools also teach foreign languages as part of their curriculum.

The most significant task, and sometimes most controversial, with each education system is determining how much of each subject will be taught to create the most balanced education. As stated before, this can differ from system to system. Such aspects as what courses/subjects are to be taught, how long each subject will be taught throughout the day/school year/academic career, what topics are to be covered in each subject, and determining competency and consequences for not reaching competency are all issues and concerns that need to be addressed. Each subject can be justified in many ways, and its importance and value are the driving points for why they are included in today's education system.

This is just a start to exploring what education is. This topic can be a whole paper in and of itself, but let us focus on just one of those subjects more in-depth. That subject being the subject of music.

What is Music, Music Education?

Exploring one more time into the definition and history of a word, the word "music"

derives from the Middle French word “musique,” which derived from the Latin word “musica,” which derived from the Greek word “mousikos,” which is “any art ruled by Zeus’s nine daughters who protected the arts, known as *mousae*, or *muses*” (*Musical Word Origins*, 2013). Zeus’s nine daughters were “believed to be the personifications of literary arts, music, visual arts, and science” and were the “divine source of human inspiration and artistic creativity, the sacred spark that ignited the mind of music composers” (Frischia, 2021). While this gives us a brief look into the word’s history, what exactly is music?

The definition of music varies from person to person. What I think music is might not be the same as what someone else thinks music is. The definition of music has probably changed since its origins. In reading many different definitions of music, I feel that a basic definition of music is the organization of sound through time that expresses ideas and emotions. Without further exploring what music is, let us look into music as an educational subject.

Music education should be available for all Kindergarten through 12th-grade students. In elementary school, every grade should have a music class that teaches kids how to sing, play instruments, read and compose music, and some elements of music history. It should include multiple musical styles and genres and some form of performance, whether for an audience or just within the class. This comprehensive approach helps students learn about the entire process of music. It gives them a complete understanding of music to better understand it and be able to appreciate all forms and styles of music. The concepts are taught logically in sequential order, with the depth and breadth of concepts taught increasing with age.

Middle and high school students should have ample opportunities for music. Our first thought is always performing ensembles, such as bands, choirs, and orchestras. While this satisfies a group of students who want to be in these classes, it can be outnumbered by those who

are not. Some of their reasons for not being in these classes vary from the desire to be in them to not having enough time in their course schedule to financial obligations. This is a struggle because we are missing out on a large population of students not involved in music past their elementary years. We need to investigate more opportunities for our students to experience music. Can we create different performance groups that allow students to learn piano, guitar, or drums? Can we offer a rock band class? Can we offer a music composition class? These questions are difficult to answer, depending on who is answering them. For me, the answer is obviously yes, but then we need more teachers, more instruments and equipment, and more time in the schedule. This immediately brings up the issues of staffing and available funding. Does the school have enough resources to hire another teacher to help teach these classes? Will this pull current teachers away from their current teaching obligations? These are questions to consider.

Connecting Education with Music Education

A common theme in this reflection is that what is something to someone is not always the same to others. In this sense, music education may be different from person to person, culture to culture, etc. Even the why is going to have varying levels of importance. I feel music and music education need to be included in formal education for many reasons. The first reason is that music has played and continues to play a large part in our lives. It has played a large part in the history of many cultures as a means of communication, entertainment, sacred and secular ceremonies and rituals, and artistic expression. This is why music has appeared in the history of so many cultures for a long time. Music has been a means of connecting and bonding members of society. It creates social connections that not many other things can do. Music encompasses so many other subjects. When we think of all the music concepts, we can include science, mathematics, physical education, and history to explain how music works. While some think of

music as a foreign language, I look to music as a universal language. There are differences within music styles and genres, but many of the overarching music concepts are the same from genre to genre and culture to culture. Listening to and performing music has healing qualities that help relieve stress and can help people focus. Learning to play an instrument and read music helps us become resilient and can help boost self-confidence. In a 2009 study, it was determined that the impact on the brain development of people with musical training spanning only 15 months in early childhood led to structural brain changes compared to typical brain development (Hyde et al., 2009). While many people would use these as the reason to teach music in our formal education systems, I feel they are a benefit of music and are not necessarily the driving force behind why decisions should be made with music education. As you can see, there are many reasons for music to be involved in people and how it can play an important part in our lives.

From the values and benefits listed above, I think a great question would be, why would you NOT want to have music as a central part of your formal education system? Music plays a vital part in a well-rounded education, and the benefits one receives from it can be a driving force to keep music an active role in education. The National Association for Music Education's 2014 National Music Standards helps give music a reason and purpose to keep it in the formal education system.

Putting the topics of education and music education together sometimes has the same result as mixing oil with water. Not all stakeholders in the school decision-making process see the value and benefit of music. In some instances, they do but do not have the ability to support music as much as they would like. Two things that hinder the support of music education have been state testing and school funding.

State testing requirements in math, reading, and science have put those subjects at the forefront of school decision-making. More time in those classes has been a focus for improving students' test scores. In some cases, better test scores lead to better funding. One cannot fault a school for wanting more funding, but to what expense? Most of the time, the arts get stretched and squeezed to make the schedule demands for these "tested" classes. Schedule demands for those classes leave less time for the arts and other electives.

In his article, John Kratus feels music education has been brought to its tipping point because of "changes in the ways music is experienced and changes in the educational practice" (Kratus, 2007, p. 44). He also compares how music is experienced both in and out of school and shows that most of the comparisons are exact opposites. This is just one example of how we need to examine how music education is happening in our schools, what we should do to make it better for our students, and how we can use that information to help advocate for our music education classes.

Comparison to Music Philosophers

Many major music philosophers have shared their views on music's important role in our lives over the years. We can go back to Plato, Pythagoras, and Boethius when talking about such philosophers. Some more recent music education philosophers, however, include Bennett Reimer, Elliot Eisner, David Elliot, and Estelle Jorgensen, to name a few. While their viewpoints on the importance of music and its role are not identical, their reasons and beliefs help drive why music should be part of everyone's life.

It is challenging to pick a philosopher we like most because we do not always believe everything about their philosophy, or maybe agree with facets of multiple philosophers. In ways, my philosophy is similar to Elliot Eisner's. Eisner believed that the most important aspect of the

music-making process is the process itself. While it is nice to have quality performances, the process of what we learned and how we learned it is just as important, if not more important. He also feels that the student is just as important as art itself. In my teaching, I often think of teaching students about music, not teaching music to students. I feel there is a big difference between these two. I also feel I am similar in ways to Bennett Reimer. I can relate to his views on music's aesthetic qualities and that we use music for music's sake. We do not have to do music to be better at other things; instead, those qualities we gain from doing music are simply a bonus to the musician.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

Music has played and will continue to play a large part in our lives. In many ways, we do not even realize all of its benefits. For this reason, we as educators need to find ways to incorporate as much music into the lives of all our students. This is why I want to incorporate more playing opportunities into our band program, thus the basis of this project. Equipping the students with the necessary skills will provide more opportunities for music-making.

We need to make sure music has its own purpose and value, and while it can be included within other subjects, it must also remain its own subject. The process of making music and all the concepts we learn about music are essential to music-making. All the proven benefits music gives us should not be the reason we teach music, but should be a bonus for getting to teach and learn about music. These extra playing opportunities will not only benefit my students' playing abilities but will also continue to play a key role in their educational and personal development.

Chapter 2 - Project Plan

Chamber music is a type of music for small ensembles in which each instrument and/or musician plays a unique part. It dates back to the Renaissance period and was commonly enjoyed as a social activity (Conselatore, 2023). Since one musician is assigned per part, it is critical for chamber musicians to be well-rounded and able to play their part well for the chamber ensemble's success. For the remainder of this report, I will refer to chamber ensembles as small ensembles, which is how we refer to them in our classroom setting.

In my current classroom setting, our band is comprised of a large ensemble, with multiple players on a majority of the instruments being used. This is also typical of orchestral and choral classrooms. A majority, if not most, of our classroom time is spent utilizing the whole ensemble to rehearse music for our performances. Very little time is dedicated to smaller ensembles. My personal experience with small ensembles did not happen until I became a music major in college. Not only did I not have any experience playing in them, but I also did not understand the importance they have for musicians. It took me a long time to understand the value of being in a brass quartet because I was so focused on the notes and rhythms of my part. I was not able to focus on all the other facets of chamber music since I had no prior knowledge or experience.

As I started my teaching career after college, I was motivated to incorporate small ensembles into my teaching curriculum. Little did I know that the school district I would be teaching at had little to no experience with small ensembles. It was challenging to try to motivate students to participate in small ensembles, since they had no prior knowledge of them, similar to what I experienced in high school band. I knew I had an uphill climb to try to incorporate small ensembles into my band program.

Another challenge I faced was the number of large group concerts we performed. My

senior high band, comprised of 9th-12th graders, had four concerts every school year, among numerous pep band performances for sporting events. I felt very overwhelmed by the expectations of all these performances. Every rehearsal felt like it had to be a large group rehearsal to prepare us for our scheduled performances. To be able to incorporate a small ensemble unit into our program would have required students to come in before or after school, which came with its own list of challenges.

In the last several years, we have taken away one of our scheduled concerts. This has provided more rehearsal time to prepare for each concert. This could provide an opportunity for more difficult music, since we have more time to prepare. It has also opened a door to adding a small ensemble program into our curriculum. We have utilized four-part chorales in our large ensemble warm-ups. However, I needed a way to teach them about small ensembles and the value they have for them as musicians, both individually and within the large ensemble.

Thinking back to when I started playing in small ensembles conjured up many benefits in my playing. These are the basis for the goals of teaching my students to play in small ensembles through this project. The first benefit is independence. Being the only person on a part requires that part to be learned thoroughly by the musician. The success of the ensemble is contingent upon each part being successfully learned/played. This directly coincides with the next goal of confidence. Being the only player on a part does not allow a player to “hide behind” another player. When all parts are played with confidence, the group can quickly diagnose any issues that may arise during the rehearsal phase. This directly connects with the next goal of teamwork. In many instances, the group is responsible for the musical decisions of the small ensemble. Those can range from selecting repertoire, determining aspects of the music (e.g. tempo, articulations, etc.), and how to start and end a piece without a conductor. Another crucial aspect of small

ensemble playing is utilizing listening skills. This includes listening to how each part connects to the other parts and to the song as a whole, listening for intonation/balance/blend, and listening for ensemble togetherness in beat/tempo/articulations. In his article about small ensembles in a choral setting, Stamer (2002) mentions many of the aforementioned attributes that improve with his singers who participate in small ensembles. They then bring their knowledge, decision-making, and interpretation skills they have learned back into the large ensemble setting. These improvements can immediately be applied to the large ensemble rehearsal, where students take more ownership in the process of music making.

The following are four lessons taught to my symphonic band, which is our 10th-12th grade ensemble. The lessons incorporate playing three different quartets. Each student received all four parts for the three quartets. Each lesson will outline how we took the large ensemble down into smaller ensembles, with the ultimate goal of having each of the three songs performed by quartets, with one student per part.

Lesson Plan 1

Our first lesson began with each student receiving music for all three quartets. Although all students received all four parts for each of the three songs, each student was assigned one part from one song they would ultimately be responsible for performing in a quartet. The selected songs were "Matona mia cara" by Orlando di Lasso, "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" by Dmitry Bortniansky, and "All Things Bright and Beautiful" by William Henry Monk. Below are examples of a condensed piano score for each song, along with the flute part for "All Things Bright and Beautiful," illustrating what the students' parts looked like.

I intentionally selected these three songs for several reasons. First, they are all in concert B-flat, which is a commonly used key signature for my students. Second, the rhythms were all

familiar to my students. These two aspects allowed my students to focus on some of the goals and benefits of small ensemble playing, rather than on music that was too difficult for them to play. The last aspect in selecting these pieces was that none of these songs were familiar to the students. This would encourage them to play what they saw in their music and not base it on how they know the song is supposed to sound. These three aspects would allow my students to easily perform unfamiliar music and learn how to perform it within small ensembles, thus allowing them to focus on the goals previously listed.

In our first lesson, students sat in their usual assigned seats, and we did our familiar warm-up and tuning exercises. This included our B-flat major warm-up sheet, chorale #10, and our tuning sequence. I presented to the students how the project was going to work. They were then given time to sightread all four parts of the three songs independently. This allowed them to process the music they were about to play as a group. Then we played, in unison, each of the four parts of song #1, “Matona mia cara.” Playing in unison both helped them to learn the parts quicker and to be able to detect errors on their own, which is something they will have to do when playing in small ensembles. We continued the same process with the other two songs. Again, this allowed students a chance to hear all four parts individually and focus on their assigned part, which they will be working on in the next steps. We finished our class period with a run-through of one of our concert pieces as a review, and ended with announcements of upcoming events.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr4.1.E.5a - Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the structure of the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual or ensemble.

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

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

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Students in symphonic band have been playing their instruments for 6-8 years. They have a deep understanding of their instruments and note reading. With their current music knowledge and skills, they will be able to perform the selected songs with limited errors, allowing them to focus on the goals and aspects of learning to play in small ensembles.

Rehearsal Objective

The main rehearsal objective for this lesson was to introduce the students to the songs they would be learning to play in their small ensembles. This started by outlining the project and how we would take it from a macro to a micro approach, starting with the full ensemble and narrowing it down to a quartet. This was followed by every student playing each part of all three songs. Playing each part in unison allowed the students to learn their part as a whole group. This helped the students to be more confident with their playing and provided a basis for what each part will sound like. Having the knowledge of which part they would ultimately be responsible for performing helped reinforce the learning of that part. Playing and hearing their part in unison with everyone in the ensemble gave them a baseline of what it would sound like. This helped them to have more confidence on their assigned part, especially students who might struggle with sightreading and who take longer to learn to read and play music.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

As this was the first lesson in our project, most of the assessments used were formative. I would offer suggestions on aspects of their playing that they should focus on and then listen to and correct mistakes along the way. I asked students about things they noticed about their playing, both correct and incorrect, and asked them for ways to improve. This started the process of having them be active listeners, a crucial component of playing in a small ensemble.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

As this was their first experience playing in small ensembles, picking the right music was critical. I wanted to select music that would be easy for them to play based on their prior knowledge. I selected music with familiar key signatures and rhythms and within a comfortable range for most of my students. The music is predominantly homophonic, and no one part plays by itself, which is not always typical of small ensemble music. This was intentional to keep things simple for their first small ensemble experience.

In assigning parts, I considered each student's playing ability and experience. "Matona mia cara" is slightly easier than the other two, so I assigned some of my younger students to that song and my older students to the other two. I also considered abilities and instrumentation when assigning each student's part within the songs and when creating the quartets. This will come into play in future lessons.

Instructional Materials, Resources, and Technologies

Below are the examples of the songs I selected for this project. Figures 2.1, 2.2, and 2.3 are the piano reductions for the three songs. Figure 2.4 is an example of the parts each student received. I opted to write out each part separately instead of putting it in a score style. While I went back and forth with this, I came to the conclusion that playing their part was the more

important aspect of this project, instead of seeing the other three parts and how they work together. Also, in most of the small ensemble music I have played before, each part is separate from the other parts. A score might be provided for rehearsals, but since this is the first step in the process for my students, I decided to write out the parts individually.

Matona mia cara Orlando di Lasso
(1532-1594)

Figure 2.1 - Piano score for “Matona mia cara” (Lasso, 2021/1581)

Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe Dmitry Bortniansky
(1751-1825)
I pray to the power of Love

Figure 2.2 - Piano score for “Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe” (Bortniansky, 2021/1822)

All Things Bright and Beautiful

Melody by William Henry Monk
Lyrics by Cecil Frances Alexander



Figure 2.3 - Piano score for “All Things Bright and Beautiful” (Monk, 2016/1887)

Flute #3 - All Things Bright and Beautiful

Flute

Soprano

2

Tenor

Flute

Alto

Bass

The image displays the flute part for the hymn "All Things Bright and Beautiful". It is organized into two columns of staves. The left column contains four staves for Soprano, Alto, and Bass voices, and the right column contains four staves for Tenor and Bass voices. Each staff is numbered 1 through 24. The music is written in a simple, homophonic style, with the right hand playing the melody and the left hand providing harmonic support. The score is numbered 6, 11, 16, and 20 at the beginning of the systems.

Figure 2.4 - Example of flute part for “All Things Bright and Beautiful”

Rehearsal Plan

Below is the rehearsal plan I used for the first lesson. I utilized some familiar aspects, such as our warm-up and tuning sequence, as well as including a run-through of one of our concert selections. This was a good balance of familiar concepts and allowed for the project to not completely overwhelm the students in the first lesson.

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
1 min	Welcome	Start Class	Daily	N/A
5 min	B-flat Major Warm-up Sheet	Warm-up	Daily	Formative
2 min	Chorale #10	Warm-up/Intonation	Daily	Formative
3 min	Tuning Sequence	Tuning	Daily	Formative
5 min	Introduce the steps of our small ensemble project	Prep for step 1 of the project	New Material	N/A
7 min	Sightread all four parts of the three songs (on own)	Prep for step 1 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	All four parts of Song #1	Step 1 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	All four parts of Song #2	Step 1 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	All four parts of Song #3	Step 1 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	Play through Choose Joy	Review current pieces	Review	Formative
2 min	Announcements/Pack-up	End Class	Daily	N/A

Table 2.1 - Lesson sequence for Lesson #1

Lesson #1 Reflection

Overall, the first step in the process went well. I think allowing time for the students to individually sightread all the parts of the three songs helped them when they performed them as a large ensemble, even if they were playing in unison for this first phase. The students appeared to catch on to how the project would work. They seemed eager to learn the music and quickly get to the small ensembles. I debated doing all four lessons in a row, but decided to give time between

the phases of the project. This would allow students a little extra time to work individually on the parts, especially on the part that was assigned to them for the final step. I already realized the music was too easy for many of the students, but all things considered, I knew that would be just fine since breaking it down into quartets at the end would be the challenge for them.

Lesson Plan 2

The second lesson of this project occurred a few rehearsals after the first lesson. This allowed time for students to work individually on their assigned part of their song. Students were encouraged to practice their parts in their daily warm-up routine before rehearsal, but we did not practice them together as a full ensemble since our previous lesson.

For this lesson, students sat in their usual seating arrangement, which is a standard concert band arrangement. We started with individual warm-up time, our E-flat major warm-up sheet, chorale #11, and our tuning sequence. I then asked students to compare and contrast how playing in small ensembles will be compared to playing in the large ensemble. This led to a discussion about the goals and benefits of small ensemble playing. The students were very thorough in their thoughts and discussion.

Students were then given time to individually play through all the parts of the songs again, specifically focusing on their assigned part. Once completed, we moved into step two of the project. Everyone played, in unison, the soprano part of "Matona mia cara." I then asked for half of the band to switch to the alto part, giving us two parts together. This process continued with the tenor and bass parts until all four parts of the song were played together. I encouraged the higher-voiced instruments to stay mainly on the soprano and alto parts, and the lower-voiced instruments to keep making their way down to the tenor and bass parts. If their assigned part was from this song, students were instructed to stay on their assigned part. This process was repeated

with the other two songs. This gave students an idea of how the four parts of each song will sound when played together while also providing more time to learn their parts as a whole group, building confidence for the upcoming steps. We finished our class period with a run-through of one of our concert pieces as a review and ended with announcements of upcoming events.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr4.1.E.5a - Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the structure of the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual or ensemble.

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

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

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Having previously rehearsed these songs, the students brought their prior knowledge and skills as they worked on this next step. They sightread every part of each song, played each part in unison as a full ensemble, and were encouraged to practice them in their warm-up time before rehearsals started. They also utilized their full ensemble skills to be able to play the four parts of the song together instead of just the unison lines that were played in the previous step.

Rehearsal Objective

The main rehearsal objective for this lesson was to start hearing what the songs would sound like with all four parts together and to get an idea of how the parts work together. This was accomplished as a full ensemble, giving students more time to gain confidence on their

individually assigned part while hearing the full, final sound of each song. The other objective was to get the students thinking about how playing in smaller groups will be similar to and different from the large ensembles they are used to playing in. I let this discussion be more student-driven to see what they were already thinking about, so that I could consider how to guide our future steps and discussion to achieve successful small ensemble playing.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

As in the first lesson, most of the assessments used in this lesson were formative in nature. I gave students time to discuss strategies and goals they could think of as we continue to narrow down from the full ensemble to the small ensemble. This led to further discussion and exploration into the goals I had in mind from the start of this project. Also, through their playing of the songs, I continued diagnosing issues in notes and rhythms that would need improvement for the next play-through.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

This lesson of the project still relies on the full ensemble, which is what the students are used to. This continues their development and confidence in their playing, looking ahead to the following lessons. From my standpoint, I thought I knew how much time I wanted to spend on this project and still be able to continue preparations for our upcoming concert. This ended up playing a factor in how detailed and in-depth I went with each lesson. I feel as if there were things I did not discuss or could have discussed in further detail, or different ways to implement the playing of all four parts. This will be something in future years that I will be able to balance more appropriately, having gone through this project.

Instructional Materials, Resources, and Technologies

Other than a different warm-up, chorale, and concert repertoire used at the beginning and

end of the lesson, there were no new resources used for this lesson. Students utilized the same materials from the previous lesson.

Rehearsal Plan

Below is the rehearsal plan I used for the second lesson. I continued to utilize some familiar aspects, such as our warm-up and tuning sequence and a run-through of one of our concert selections. The balance allowed us time to work on the project and continue work on our concert preparations.

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
3 min	Welcome/Warm-up	Start Class	Daily	N/A
5 min	E-flat Major Warm-up Sheet	Warm-up	Daily	Formative
2 min	Chorale #11	Warm-up/Intonation	Daily	Formative
3 min	Tuning Sequence	Tuning	Daily	Formative
5 min	Discuss goals for small ensemble playing	Prep for future steps	New Material	Formative
5 min	Play all four parts of the three songs (on own)	Prep for step 2 of the project	Review	Formative
5 min	All four parts of song #1 (adding parts together)	Step 2 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	All four parts of song #2 (adding parts together)	Step 2 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	All four parts of song #3 (adding parts together)	Step 2 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	Play through Country Club Stomp	Review current pieces	Review	Formative
2 min	Announcements/Pack-up	End Class	Daily	N/A

Table 2.2 - Lesson sequence for Lesson #2

Lesson #2 Reflection

The students were very thorough in comparing small and large ensemble playing. I started the discussion and let them lead it. I did not interject any of my thoughts and ideas until the very end. By that time, they had already mentioned things like starting the music, staying together with no conductor, and deciding on musical aspects of the piece, to name a few. They already knew there would be no conductor giving them all that information and that they would get to do those things and make those decisions. I could see who liked that idea and who was not ready for that step yet. In many instances, I feel my large ensembles have fewer leaders than followers. Many of the students are there to play music with everyone, not themselves or small groups. They thrive in the large ensemble setting, and being in small ensembles is not what they are there to do. Moving forward, that might be the biggest hurdle to overcome.

This lesson, with everyone starting on the melody and splitting up the group until all four parts were played, was a logical step and went well. The bigger picture started making more sense to the students since they were hearing how the parts sounded together rather than each individual part, as in the previous lesson. I think enough time has been spent on learning their individual parts and they are ready to move on to the next lesson.

Lesson Plan 3

Lesson three also occurred a few rehearsals after the second lesson. I continued to encourage students to use their assigned part as part of their warm-up routine. We did not play through the songs during any of the other rehearsals between lessons two and three.

For this lesson, students started out in their usual seating arrangement, but would be rearranged by song after our warm-ups. We started with individual warm-up time, our F major warm-up sheet, chorale #12, and our tuning sequence. We then rearranged our seating so that

students would be arranged by song. “Matona mia cara” was to my right, "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" in the middle, and "All Things Bright and Beautiful" to my left. Within each group, I had the soprano line seated in the front row, the alto line in the second row, the tenor line in the third row, and the bass line in the fourth row. I also arranged students so that each of their assigned quartets sat in a vertical column. When grouped by song, there were now 16 players per ensemble, instead of 48 with the full ensemble.

After the band was rearranged, each song group was given several minutes to practice by part (soprano, alto, tenor, bass) before coming back together with the full ensemble. After all three song groups were given time to practice, we reviewed the concepts and goals of playing in small ensembles, in preparation for performing in smaller groups during this lesson. Each smaller group performed their song together, with all four players on each part playing together with all four parts. Unlike the last lesson, in which each part was added to the next, all four parts were played together on the first playthrough. All three song groups performed their song using this same process. I assisted by conducting, but I encouraged students to think about how they will perform without a conductor in the next lesson. We finished our class time with a run-through of one of our concert pieces as a review and ended with announcements of upcoming events.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr4.1.E.5a - Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the structure of the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual or ensemble.

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

performances.

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

Prior Knowledge/Skills

Now that the students have had the music for over a week, most, if not all, feel comfortable playing their part individually. This allowed this step of the project to be highly successful. Also, with all of the previous discussions of small ensemble playing, the students started taking ownership of their practice and performance.

Rehearsal Objective

One of the main objectives of this lesson was to start giving students ownership in the process of rehearsing and performing, similar to what their responsibilities will be when they are performing in their small ensembles. This was very evident in the rehearsal phase of the lesson when many students volunteered to be the leader and count in their song group. Some of the leaders were the same students I had put into those groups who I thought would be leaders, while other groups had different students step up to be leaders. This was promising to see, knowing that other students were stepping up to be leaders. This will hopefully continue beyond this project into their future performances with small ensembles.

The other objective was to start the process of performing in smaller groups. While each part had four players playing, that number was significantly reduced from lesson two. This naturally engaged some of the goals and benefits of small ensemble playing, such as active listening and confidence. While these two aspects were demonstrated in the previous lesson, the level at which they were demonstrated increased when fewer students were playing.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

The assessments for this lesson are still formative and include diagnosing issues that arise while the students are rehearsing and performing. This continued to improve their playing for the next lesson of the project.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

As mentioned before, I considered which part and song each student would be assigned to play. I also assigned students to their quartets, based mostly on instrumentation and abilities. I wanted each quartet to have someone I thought would be a good leader to help facilitate discussion and decisions that would arise, as well as be able to start and end the piece. Unfortunately, we did not get a chance for each of the quartets to rehearse individually, so the leaders did not facilitate rehearsals.

Instructional Materials, Resources, and Technologies

Aside from a different warm-up, chorale, and concert repertoire used at the beginning and end of the lesson, no new resources were introduced for this lesson. Students used the same materials as in the previous lessons.

Rehearsal Plan

Below is the rehearsal plan I used for the third lesson. I continued to utilize some familiar aspects, such as our warm-up and tuning sequence and a run-through of one of our concert selections. The balance allowed us time to work on the project and continue working on our concert preparations. We did have a new seating arrangement, which grouped our songs together and put each part together by row (ie. “Matona mia cara” soprano line in first row, alto in second row, etc.).

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
3 min	Welcome	Start Class	Daily	N/A
5 min	F Major Warm-up Sheet	Warm-up	Daily	Formative
2 min	Chorale #12	Warm-up/Intonation	Daily	Formative
3 min	Tuning Sequence	Tuning	Daily	Formative
3 min	Rearrange seating by song (S - 1 st row, A - 2 nd row, T - 3 rd row, B - 4 th row)	Prep for step 3 of the project	New Material	N/A
10 min	Play through song with part members (ie. song 1-S, etc.)	Prep for step 3 of the project	Review	Formative
4 min	All four parts of song #1	Step 3 of the project	New Material	Formative
4 min	All four parts of song #2	Step 3 of the project	New Material	Formative
4 min	All four parts of song #3	Step 3 of the project	New Material	Formative
5 min	Play through Air for Band	Review current pieces	Review	Formative
2 min	Announcements/Pack-up	End Class	Daily	N/A

Table 2.3 - Lesson sequence for Lesson #3

Lesson #3 Reflection

The third lesson of the project really started bringing everything into focus. Splitting the band up into song groups helped the students see who was in their group and who was in their assigned quartet. Being seated by their voice part gave them one extra practice before bringing it down to the level of the small ensemble. It would have been nice to utilize a bigger space for this rehearsal. I wanted each voice part of each song to practice together. I gave each song group some time to work, but there were still 16 students playing at the same time, so it was hard for them to focus and stay together. If we could have moved our groups to the gym or some other bigger space, I think it would have allowed for a more successful practice in their parts group.

The students were successful in their group performances. I think it was the correct way to break it down from 48 to 16. The next logical breakdown, which could have been this lesson or the next, would have been eight students, or two quartets. We could have added another lesson to the sequence to do that as well. I could see students still mainly focusing on the notes and rhythms. I was hoping for a little more confidence by this point, but that should still improve as they keep working on it.

Lesson Plan 4

This is the fourth and final lesson and a chance for the students to showcase all of their work. As with the previous lesson, no rehearsal time was dedicated to working on the small ensemble music, other than the students working on it individually in their warm-ups.

Similar to lesson three, students started out in their usual seating arrangement, but would be rearranged by song after our warm-ups. We started with individual warm-up time, our A-flat major warm-up sheet, chorale #8, and our tuning sequence. We then rearranged our seating to be grouped together by song. "Matona mia cara" was to my right, "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" in the middle, and "All Things Bright and Beautiful" to my left. This time, each of the assigned quartet members were seated by row, with the bass part on the far left of the group and working up to the soprano being on the far right of the group.

After the band was rearranged, time was allowed for each song group to practice. Each song group was given several minutes to practice their song. While they were seated by quartet, the practice time was the entire song group, not individual quartets. After all three groups were given time to practice, it was time to showcase all the work that had gone into the preparations and rehearsals. Each song had four quartet groups, for a total of 12 quartets. I was hoping to hear 12 quartets perform, but only ended up hearing six, two from each song. The main reason for this

was a lack of eager participants. I asked for a willing quartet to start, but did not have a quartet volunteer. I do not think it was a lack of preparation or ability, but rather just an unwillingness to perform in front of peers. Since there was not a quartet willing to perform, I took volunteers from the song group willing to play each part, and we created new quartet groupings. Reforming the quartet did not affect their performance since not much time was given to rehearse within their originally assigned quartets. The rearranged groups were able to start their performance on their own and did not need help from a director to stay together. We were able to make and listen to two quartets for each of the three song groups, which took the remainder of the lesson.

National Music Standards (2014)

MU:Pr4.1.E.5a - Select varied repertoire to study based on interest, music reading skills (where appropriate), an understanding of the structure of the music, context, and the technical skill of the individual or ensemble.

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

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

MU: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

This project is now in its fourth lesson, and almost two weeks have elapsed since the start of lesson one. The students' work on their parts and discussions about small ensemble playing have prepared them for performing in small ensembles.

Rehearsal Objective

As the final lesson in our project, the rehearsal objective was to compile all of the knowledge and skills learned through the previous three lessons to play the songs in small ensembles, the goal being that each quartet performs. The performance would include starting together on their own, staying together as best as possible, and listening to each other while performing to create a successful performance. The ultimate goal was for the students to acquire the skills needed to rehearse and perform in small groups on their own, without spending time learning the parts in unison like we did in this project. Students would then be able to participate in solo and ensemble contests in the future. Finally, students would be able to apply the skills learned in playing in small ensembles to the larger ensemble rehearsals and performances.

Assessment of the Rehearsal

Unlike the other lessons, the assessments in this lesson were mainly summative. This lesson was the opportunity to put all aspects of the previous lessons together to see the final outcome of the work. After arranging the students into their performing groups, I could take a step back and watch as they worked to start their performance, play together without a conductor, and apply the leadership and confidence they built through the previous three lessons. It was an excellent opportunity to see their growth, and it brought to light some of the areas I will be able to improve upon when we do this again next year. With half the class performing in a small ensemble as the culmination of this project, teaching a small ensemble unit will take less time with quicker results, since many of the students will have already acquired the necessary skills.

Relevant Contextual Factors and Modifications/Accommodations Needed

This would be the first experience for many of the students performing in a small

ensemble. For this reason, I provided flexibility for their in-class performances. Although I assigned each student to be in a specific quartet, I allowed students from other quartets to create a new quartet, but they were to remain on their initially assigned parts. This meant not everyone played during our class time. However, we were able to form two quartets from the three songs, which meant half of the students performed.

Instructional Materials, Resources, and Technologies

Other than the different warm-ups and chorale used at the beginning of the lesson, no new materials or resources were used in this lesson.

Rehearsal Plan

Below is the rehearsal plan I used for the last lesson. I continued to utilize some familiar aspects, such as our warm-up and tuning sequence. Besides the warm-ups, we dedicated the remaining rehearsal to our performances of each quartet. We did have a new seating arrangement, which grouped the assigned quartets together by row (ie. one quartet of “Matona mia cara” per row, each row from left to right being bass, tenor, alto, soprano, etc.).

Time	Activity	Purpose of Activity	Sequence	Assessment
2 min	Welcome	Start Class	Daily	N/A
5 min	A-flat Major Warm-up Sheet	Warm-up	Daily	Formative
3 min	Chorale #8	Warm-up/Intonation	Daily	Formative
3 min	Tuning Sequence	Tuning	Daily	Formative
3 min	Rearrange seating by quartet (One quartet per row)	Prep for step 4	New Material	N/A
6 min	Practice the song within assigned quartets	Prep for step 4	Review	Formative
7 min	All four quartets of song #1 (ended up with only two)	Step 4 of the project	New Material	Summative
7 min	All four quartets of song #2	Step 4 of the project	New Material	Summative

	(ended up with only two)			
7 min	All four quartets of song #3 (ended up with only two)	Step 4 of the project	New Material	Summative
2 min	Announcements/Pack-up	End Class	Daily	N/A

Table 2.4 - Lesson sequence for Lesson #4

Lesson #4 Reflection

As this was the final lesson, I was anxious to see how the students would respond to playing in quartets. As previously mentioned, not everyone was willing to participate. I could have required everyone to perform, regardless of their comfort level and desire to do so. I did not force the subject and rearranged the students into two willing quartets for each song. Forcing the students to play could have negatively impacted their experience and could affect their participation in small ensembles in future years. Overall, I thought that having half the students willing to participate was a success. As mentioned in lesson three, we could have had groups of eight perform instead of four, but that could be a consideration for next year. The students who did perform enjoyed their experience and are already talking about performing in our solo and ensemble contest next year. I would have liked to give time for each quartet to practice individually as a group instead of performing right away. We could have found some space for them to practice before their performance.

In my 15 years of teaching, I have taught minimal small ensemble playing, which has not necessarily adversely affected our band program as a whole. We still have had great musicians and wonderful bands come and go over the years. However, being able to develop a small ensemble program is only going to improve both the individual musician and the full ensemble. I think introducing this unit to my concert band, which is comprised of just 9th graders, could be a beneficial starting point. Teaching it to a smaller large ensemble could be easier, and finding a

bigger place to spread out would be easier, since that ensemble usually has around 30 students. I think many informative things have come from this project, and I look forward to seeing what it has provided for my older students and building upon what we worked on this year.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

As I reflect on the outcome of my project, I start by saying I am very pleased with the process and the initial outcome. My students worked very hard throughout the four lessons. Not only were they willing to work on something new, but many of them exceeded my expectations. While I did not have everyone willing to play at the end of the lessons, over half of them did. If this number continues into next year, I am confident that I will have numerous groups willing to participate in our solo and ensemble competition next school year.

While I feel very satisfied with the end result, I look back on how I could improve this for next year. For starters, I will find ways to implement this into the first half of the school year. This could all be incorporated into our warm-up routine, so we have a longer time to develop it even further than we did. The number of music selections could increase. Increasing the song number to five or six would allow students some ownership in picking a song they want to work on instead of just being assigned to a particular song. Allowing them a chance to pick the members of their ensemble could allow for more cohesive groups that work well together. Giving the quartets an opportunity to practice in a more secluded area, rather than in the band room with everyone else playing, could allow for some of those goals and skills of small ensemble playing to flourish. Playing two different parts together, such as the bass and alto lines together, instead of just adding one part after another, as we did in the second lesson, will help further develop their listening skills.

While this list seems long, this project laid the foundation for what could develop into a successful small ensemble program. Improving the skills needed for small ensemble playing can create leaders and better musicians in the larger ensemble setting. The benefits of this project could impact our program and students for years to come.

Many factors drove my decision to pursue a master's degree. One of those factors was the desire to be better at what I do. In this case, I wanted to become a better teacher. Every class over the course of my master's degree has helped me achieve this goal. From conducting to curriculum, arranging to research, percussion to woodwinds, history to philosophy, all of these have improved my abilities and understanding of what it is I do as an educator. Some have immediately affected my teaching and conducting, others have provided me with more of the "why" we do what we do, and others have equipped me with tools to continue improving.

When comparing the courses I took at Kansas State University while pursuing my master's degree to those I took for my undergraduate degree at North Dakota State University, I found that many of the courses covered similar topics. However, since I completed my undergraduate studies 15 years ago, much has changed. This change does not pertain to how to conduct or arrange music or the fingerings for notes on the clarinet, but rather to my perspectives and understanding of these subjects.

For starters, my 15 years of teaching experience have significantly influenced my perspective on music education. My lifelong passion for music made the initial decision to pursue music education an easy one. That love for music was instilled in me from a young age. Music has played a significant role in the lives of many of my family members, so it was no surprise that it became an important part of my life as well. Additionally, attending a high school where music was an integral part of the education system further deepened my appreciation and enjoyment of music. It shaped my desire to teach music to future generations.

Many of the students I have taught over the years enjoy making music. They enjoy it for entertainment, social aspects, and the ability to be expressive. Music plays an important role in their lives. They receive so many benefits from learning to play an instrument, reading music,

and being part of an ensemble. Most of them will not even realize how much it impacts the other aspects of their lives.

Some students do not share that same love and passion for making music. I often find myself wondering why. Was the role of music minimized during their childhood? Were they never encouraged, or perhaps actively discouraged, to make music at home? Did they have a bad experience with music that has turned them away from music? Is there ever a way to bring music-making back into their lives? I have thought about these numerous questions through my coursework over the past three years at KSU.

Many answers to the previous questions can be found in the history of music education. Music education has experienced both ups and downs throughout its history. There have been times when it flourished and took center stage, and other times when it played a secondary role and received little attention. At times, it is even cut for various reasons. This reflects how music is treated by individuals, households, communities, and schools. This does not diminish its impact or importance. Sometimes, we need to be creative and find alternative ways to connect students with music.

As I look ahead into the world of music education, it is hard to tell what the future holds. It is difficult to tell what is in store for the education system. Many schools in our area are making difficult choices with funding and budget cuts. It always seems that the arts are the first place they look to eliminate to make ends meet. If only they knew all the other things they are forfeiting when they cut music positions. It is hard to see the thing I am most passionate about being eliminated from the education system. I desire always to keep my passion for music and help keep it in the lives of our students.

If we continue to demonstrate that music has value, it shows our subject's importance in the education system and its ability to provide a well-rounded education experience for our students. Many of the classes I took over the last three years helped do just that by deepening my knowledge of teaching, music, and band. They have helped my decision-making be more intentional and purposeful. This ranges from selecting literature for my ensembles throughout the year, to teaching my percussionists the proper playing techniques, to implementing a student leadership group for my ensembles, and improving my conducting and rehearsing. The coursework has really ignited the flame I have for teaching. It was not that the flame was going out or flickering, but my classes at KSU made me realize that what I do is important and inspired me to ensure I am doing the best I can for my students and program. The program has made me realize I can always be better. I know how to find the answer if I do not have the answer. It has helped solidify the role I play within the education system. I do not remember where I heard it before, but it goes something like this: I am not a music teacher; instead, I teach students about music. I want my students to value their time learning to play their instruments and learning to read music as much as I did growing up. I want to be motivated to go the extra mile, like the teachers, professors, and band directors that I have had over the years did for me. They have all given me inspiration to dig deep and provide the best opportunities possible.

All of these previous thoughts and ideas were magnified over the last three years at KSU. I look forward to continuing to improve my teaching, conducting, and rehearsing. I am genuinely grateful for the opportunity to have learned from some of the best in the profession and hope to be an inspiration to other teachers, regardless of their subject area. This world needs great educators who are motivated to make a difference. Additionally, I hope the lessons my students have learned through making music will help them achieve anything they put their minds to.

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