

Simple to complex: Keys to musical growth in a high school band class

by

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Abstract

In the spring of 2019, I implemented a study of key signatures with my high school band to create better theoretical musical understanding amongst my students and create opportunities for individual technical improvement. The goal was to have each student create a personal relationship with every key signature, starting with sound and experience first and notation later. We started with 3 keys: one flat, one sharp, and no flats or sharps. Each week we would add one more flat and sharp to our key signatures. To demonstrate their understanding of a key, students would perform a key signature's major, natural minor, harmonic minor and melodic minor scales without looking at musical notation.

The process of getting my master's degree has helped me to continue to grow and change as a music educator over time. It has pushed me out of my comfort zone and helped me take risks. I have added more compositional elements to my classes at all levels. I also took a hard look at my literature selections for my concert group. I was empowered to go look for composers outside the mainstream publishers and found great original works for my group to perform that created conversations about musical styles, and the history of concert bands. The creation of my personal music teaching theory helped clarify and solidify my teaching practice grades 5-12. I have a clear purpose to my methodology that is grounded in solid educational theory and experiences beyond my own classroom walls.

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Dedication

To Ken. Thanks for the cheerleading, commiserating, and Moscow mules. Your dedication to students and educational excellence is inspiring.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

Music is a basic component of what it means to be human and it serves many functions over the course of a lifespan. When we teach music to our youth, we teach them about history. They learn about the society and culture they live in. We give them windows into other cultures. They learn how to take an active part in a large group in a variety of ways. They learn how to master an instrument over time. They learn about themselves.

Making music is a human activity. Brain science has confirmed what music philosophers and educators have said for many years- music is hardwired into the brain. Music exists in all cultures and all music has value. The process of learning to make music changes the brain and fosters lifelong skills that benefit the learner within the music curriculum and outside of it. I agree with Education and Art Professor Elliott Eisner (1998), that while the arts can provide an affective release to the performer and the listener, they are much more than that. Performance is important to music making, but it is not the only thing that matters. Being trained in music is equal to learning any other school curriculum; both are a vehicle designed to change the way people think. Music can reach people in ways other methods or curriculum do not. Music is a lifelong endeavor. There is always another level of expertise to be mastered, other cultures or styles to explore, and maybe another instrument to learn. I believe, like Eisner, that teaching is an art whose goal should be productive diversity. We don't need everyone to play the same instrument or sing in unison all the time. There is strength, beauty and depth to the different paths where music can lead.

Music provides a place for growth and learning. We learn about music itself. We learn how to manipulate music through composing and arranging. We learn how to create music with our voices or on an instrument. We learn about different styles of music and learn how to

improvise and create our own style. We learn how to work with others and about how our own brain learns. Music helps everyone make connections and grow beyond themselves.

Teaching Philosophy

My philosophy of music education is a paraxial, utilitarian and experience-based philosophy. Music is a unique experience. Creating, performing and listening are all relevant aspects. I believe that there are many ways to engage with music and all music can provide an individualized experience. The process of learning how to make music is important and music can be a conduit for making connections in other disciplines. We use music to learn how to play an instrument and then use that instrument to create a musical experience for ourselves and others. Everyone has filters for their actions based on previous knowledge and experiences. My role as an educator is to provide a range of experiences for my students to help them grow as musicians over time. As an educator, I believe that students learn best when they feel safe, the curriculum is taught sequentially at an appropriate level of difficulty, and the learning occurs through experiences that start simple and grow in complexity over time. The sequential nature of the curriculum allows these experiences to become the prior knowledge necessary for the next unit of study. Many styles of learning and ways of knowing are accommodated through the instructional process so that each learner can easily appropriate the content into their own personal knowledge base. I teach students at the beginning of their instrumental career and introduce them to the basics of playing their instrument, the rudiments of writing and reading notation, and create a safe environment for them to take musical and social risks. I assist them along their path as they become intermediate musicians. I provide opportunities to play musical works that are an appropriate challenge, experience compositional and technical challenges,

explore music through listening examples, and help them feel safe enough to keep taking musical and social risks.

Being open to all music, new experiences and ideas as a teacher helps me to further the paths for my students to walk upon. My content must be relevant to their lives for them to fully participate and grow. Being part of a large ensemble helps my students learn to work with others, communicate, think of alternate strategies to achieve a common goal, problem solve, be flexible, learn and practice leadership. They learn how important each seemingly little detail can be to the bigger picture. They work with others, some of whom they do not like or know very well, to create a moment of meaning for themselves and sometimes an audience. We are a social group that relies on the strengths of everyone to create something bigger than our individual selves. We stretch ourselves as individuals to make the group stronger. We celebrate our successes, support others when they are struggling, and create a place where all are welcome. It's about the music and it's about being a kind, thoughtful, and respectful human being.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

In my unit on key signatures, called "Checkpoints," you will see my philosophy in action. First, I create for my students an experience of playing familiar notes in an unfamiliar way. We use sound patterns we already know (circle of fourths, major and natural minor scales) to help us understand how key signatures create those sound patterns. We also learn new sound patterns that match our key signatures (harmonic minor and melodic minor). You will see me create routines that allow students to feel safe when trying new key signatures and scale patterns. You will see a sequential teaching pattern that grows in complexity over the course of the week and the length of the semester.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan

I developed this lesson because I have noticed students consistently struggling to play key signatures in my concert band class. I noticed it as a differentiation point between students when they audition for chairs. I know they know their enharmonic notes and can successfully read scales with all the sharps and flats written in. I have seen and heard them do that at the middle school level. I have tried to address key signatures in class as reading exercises through method books and scale studies, but I could tell that the students not taking private lessons were not retaining the information as well as they needed to if they were going to advance their technical and musical skills. I wanted to find a way to help connect this musical concept to all my students, most of whom who do not take private lessons, in a way that was personally engaging and would have a long-term impact.

Lesson Plan: Checkpoints

My goal is for each student in Symphonic Band, the second level concert band at the high school, to be able to demonstrate their understanding of all key signatures by performing the major, natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor scales in each key signature. The desired outcomes will be that each student will build on prior knowledge to: have a personal experience with each key, develop solid technical skills on their instrument, be more successful when sight reading, and be more inclined to practice outside of class. Symphonic Band will also be able to successfully play a wider range of concert band literature. Students will submit videos of themselves performing each key signature through Canvas, therefore I will get to use technology to be one-on-one with 60 students and provide meaningful feedback on their individual progress in a timely fashion.

Sequence of learning

At the beginning of each rehearsal, students will prepare for the upcoming Checkpoint. The initial Checkpoint sequence is shown in Figure 2.1. Figure 2.2 shows adjustments in pacing and wording. Due dates are left blank to create flexibility in the schedule and so that students can write them in as the actual date is announced in class.

CHECKPOINTS	
1	<p>Recite order of sharps or flats from memory.</p> <p>Explain the relationship between the order of flats and the order of sharps.</p> <p>Starting on Concert Bb-A-Ab-G-Gb-F-E, play a descending 8-5-1 pattern</p> <p>3-valve pattern: 0-2-1-12-23-13-123</p> <p>Flute: Bb above staff Oboe: Bb in staff Clarinets: middle C Saxophones: G above staff</p> <p>DATE Trumpets/ Tenor Sax/ T.C. Baritone: C in staff Trombones/B.C. Baritone: Bb above staff</p> <p>DUE Tubas: 2nd line Bb Horns: 3rd space C (you will sound the fourth, no trigger fingerings)</p> <p>Percussion: Check and Variations at 120 bpm with metronome</p>
2	<p>Key signatures: Bb, F, C, G Major and relative Natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor</p> <p>Describe the key.</p> <p>Name the starting pitch for the Major Scale.</p> <p>Name the starting pitch for the Minor Scales and which notes will be altered.</p> <p>Perform one octave scales.</p>
3	<p>Key signatures: Ab, Eb, D, A Major and relative Natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor</p> <p>Describe the key. Name the starting pitch for the Major and the minor scales. Name altered notes.</p> <p>Perform one octave scales.</p>
4	<p>Key signatures: Gb, Db, E, B Major and relative Natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor</p> <p>Describe the key. Name the starting pitch for the Major and the minor scales. Name altered notes.</p> <p>Perform one octave scales.</p>
5	<p>Key signatures: F#, C#, Cb Major and relative Natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor</p> <p>Describe the key. Name the starting pitch for the Major and the minor scales. Name altered notes.</p> <p>Perform one octave scales.</p>

Figure 2.1 Initial learning sequence

CHECKPOINTS	
1	1. Recite order of sharps or flats from memory. 2. Explain the relationship between the order of flats and the order of sharps. 3. Starting on Concert Bb-A-Ab-G-Gb-F-E, play a descending 8-5-1 pattern 3-valve pattern: 0-2-1-12-23-13-123 Flute: Bb above staff
DATE	Trumpets/ Tenor Sax/ T.C. Baritone: C in staff
DUE	Tubas: 2nd line Bb
	or
	3. Percussion: Check and Variations at 120 bpm with metronome
	Procedure for Checkpoints 2-8.
	1. Describe key signature.
	Name Major key. Play Major scale.
	Name minor key. Play Natural minor scale.
	Name what note is being changed and why. Play Harmonic minor Scale.
	Name what notes are being changed and why. Play Melodic minor scale.
2	Key Signatures: No sharps or flats, 1 flat, 1 sharp
3	Key Signatures: 2 flats, 2 sharps
4	Key Signatures: 3 flats, 3 sharps
5	Key Signatures: 4 flats, 4 sharps
6	Key Signatures: 5 flats, 5 sharps
7	Key Signatures: 6 flats, 6 sharps
8	Key Signatures: 7 flats, 7 sharps

Figure 2.2 Adjusted learning sequence

Checkpoint 1 is designed to create a safe environment for my students to try something new. A safe environment is one where the brain is relaxed but alert to new challenges. To promote this feeling of safety in my lesson, the first checkpoint is designed to be an easy musical challenge, so students can focus on the more challenging aspect of how to submit an assignment in Canvas. For Checkpoint 1, students will recite either the order of sharps or the order of flats. Student must identify which one they are reciting and how it relates to the other. Next woodwind and brass students will perform an 8-5-1 pattern in a descending chromatics, clarinets will do 1-12-8, and percussionists will play the check and variation patterns with a metronome setting of 120 bpm. (See Figure 2.3.)

8-5-1

Figure 2.3 Checkpoint 1

For Checkpoint 2 through 8, students will perform one octave major, natural minor, harmonic minor, and melodic minor scales in the stated keys. These will be by key signature, not

concert pitch. Students will introduce the key signature, name the starting pitches of major and relative minor scales, and describe the altered notes of the minor scales. Students may use their handout (a combination of Figures 2.1 and 2.4) to assist their memory. This handout is based on page nine from the *Function Chorales* of Stephen Melillo (1980) and students will fill it in as we progress through all the keys.

KEY SIGNATURES									
WHY?		Develops the ear to hear key tonality.							
		Composers write in all keys and key signatures are merely a guide.							
		Improved understanding of technical passages in music without as much rehearsal time needed.							
		Expands the options for technique development.							
		Scales make music.							
		Scales provide an all-inclusive foundation for becoming a literate performer in any type of instrumental ensemble.							
HOW?		The scale should be known in the mind and fingers before it is played.							
		1 (Do)	2 (Re)	3 (Mi)	4 (Fa)	5 (So)	6 (La)	7 (Ti)	8 (Do)
Order of Flats:		C							C
Order of Sharps:		C#							C#
	b's	#'s							
1	F	G	Key of C						D
2	Bb	D							Eb
3	Eb	A							E
4	Ab	E							F
5	Db	B							F#
6	Gb	F#							Gb
7	Cb	C#							G
Major									A
natural minor									Bb
harmonic minor									B
melodic minor									Cb

Figure 2.4 Initial scale chart

Daily Checkpoint details

We will practice each Checkpoint in class as a group for at least a week, to provide students a chance to ask questions, hear mistakes and hear them corrected, and hear the scales performed correctly. This will help harness the social-emotional dynamics of the class. The brain is social, and to help students feel emotionally safe, the learning environment should be positive,

and working as part of a group should be the norm. Laughter and joy will be encouraged. As honest efforts are given, mistakes are made, and interesting sounds occur, the attitude of acceptance for trial and error will be honed into the group. Students will feel like a part of a bigger whole. This will help students find safety in emotional connections with the content and the people in the class.

We will spend 10-15 minutes at the beginning of class practicing for the upcoming Checkpoint. The first checkpoint will not only be an individual playing assessment; it will also teach students how to submit an assignment in Canvas. We will practice 8-5-1's for a week and they will be ready to submit their first assignment the following Sunday. The next checkpoint will take longer to learn, because we will be learning the scale patterns as well as the key signatures. We will take two weeks to practice it. To be prepared for Checkpoint 2, first we will talk about Major and minor scale patterns. Students have a section on their paper to write down these patterns (see Figure 2.4). I will use direct instruction and tell them, "Major goes Do-Do or 1-8. Natural minor starts on La or 6. Harmonic minor is like natural minor with a raised seventh. Melodic minor has a split personality. On the way up, it starts out natural minor then raises the 6 and 7. On the way down, it is natural minor." We will then construct the C Major scale on the board which they can copy onto their paper. Next, we will play the C Major scale using the circle of fourths pattern to provide pitch context. C instruments play the scale first while everyone else plays concert C, F instruments are next while everyone else holds concert F, B flat instruments play next while everyone else plays concert B flat, and lastly the E flat instruments play while everyone else holds concert E flat. We will then discover C's relative minor as a group and construct and play each minor scale in the same way that we did with the Major scale. When writing out the harmonic and melodic minor scales, students will come up with their own

symbols for the changing notes. I will draw up arrows on the board beside the letter names of the notes that needed raising, but students will be encouraged to draw whatever they need to remember. This will become the routine for every Monday after a Checkpoint. [[Monday Video 4 sharps/flats](#)][[Monday Lesson Plan](#)]

On Tuesday I will write the scales on the white board. For later Checkpoints I will have students come up and write the scales on the board. We will play either one or all the keys depending on what was played Monday, the time available, and energy level of class. Wednesday will be like Tuesdays, except we will play both keys. We don't have class on Thursday. Fridays will not have the scales written on the board to help reinforce the need for each student to write down what they need to be successful when playing on their own. [[Tuesday Video 4 sharps/flats](#)][[Tuesday Lesson Plan](#)]

As we reach Checkpoints 4 and 5, when playing the scales in class, students will be encouraged to play along with the other groups if their pedal tone pitch is one that they already know the key signature for. We also will play the scales in quartile harmony (everyone at the same time) for time purposes. [[Friday Video 4 sharps/flats](#)][[Friday Lesson Plan](#)]

Assignments will open in Canvas on Wednesday. Each Checkpoint is due the following Sunday afternoon. Late assignments are accepted and given full credit because this is about mastering the concept, not about time management. Students can resubmit misplayed scales for full credit. I will update grades in the online gradebook and on Canvas as I watch performances. This is for timely feedback, and to confirm for students that their online submission went through. Students can Airdrop me videos if they are having trouble uploading a file. Students may also play for me in person, so I can answer their questions and help them as they are

playing. They may also borrow my iPad and record directly onto it if they do not have a way to record themselves.

Adjustments

I realized four scales was too much for one week, so we adjusted the number of Checkpoints to eight, which means Checkpoint 2 has three scales, and the rest are two scales a week. I also realized my terminology was heavily weighted in the prior understanding of major scales, so I changed it to focus more on the content of the key signature. I also rewrote the scale grid with more space for students to write in and to create a clearer understanding of the scale degrees for both minor and major patterns (see Figure 2.5). I changed Friday’s routine, as well. Fridays initially followed the same routine as a Wednesday, but I realized some students were only reading the board and not writing the scale down on their grid. Not having it on the board helped reinforce the need for each student to write down what they needed to be successful when playing on their own.

Major start					minor start		
1 (Do)	2 (Re)	3 (Mi)	4 (Fa)	5 (So)	6 (La)	7 (Ti)	8 (Do)
3	4	5	6	7	1 (8)	2	
C							C
C#							C#
Db							Db
D							D
Eb							Eb
E							E
F							F
F#							F#
Gb							Gb
G							G
Ab							Ab
A							A
Bb							Bb
B							B
Cb							Cb

Figure 2.5 Adjusted scale chart

Extensions

After Checkpoint 8, which was completed mid-April, we applied our key signature knowledge in new ways. First, we learned about parallel minors and played all the major scales with their parallel minors as a class in one day. The following days, we used key signature dice to choose which two keys (one flat, one sharp) we would play that day. Sometimes we did relative minor scales and other times parallel minor. We also started performing our scales in concert pitch, so we could more easily transition to a chorale in that same key. We added articulation exercises, as well as tuning rounds when playing the scales. [[May 7 Video](#) [here](#)][[Lesson Plan](#)]

Reflections

My goal was to start small and build confidence and complexity as we went, providing opportunities to practice and process new information in a variety of ways. This was achieved. Symphonic Band students have a grasp of key signatures and scales that most did not previously possess. Without this lesson, they would not understand double sharps and double flats the visceral way they do now. The first time we raised a sharp it almost broke their brains, but when we saw a double sharp in a chorale later in the semester they understood it almost immediately. I will continue implementing this lesson in the future. For students who are in my group for a second time next year, I will have them demonstrate their key signatures by performing the same scales in thirds (arpeggios). I learned some things as well. Personally, I hadn't realized you could play 4 one octave scales, with verbal explanations included, in about a minute's time. I also hadn't realized I could use the circle of fourths to facilitate common pitch names. This tapped into student's prior knowledge and made playing the scales daily very efficient and pitch placement was intuitive for their ears. Another positive outcome is that students played the

concert literature with fewer mistakes because of key, and when there was a mistake that was key signature related, it was fixed faster and stayed fixed. This lesson was also able to tap into each student's social emotional learning. There are a lot of anxious students in my group. I stressed that I was not looking for a perfect recording. It was okay if they made a mistake, as long as they then went back and fixed it. This made several students more comfortable, and I got to see real time progress in their recordings as they thought through what they just played and what they needed to do next. [[Recovering from errors video](#)] It also literally gave me a peek into a student's home life. I saw bedrooms, living rooms, parents in the back ground, and pets. You haven't fully lived until you hear guinea pigs singing back-up for the tuba player. [[Homelife video](#)]

Chapter 3 - Reflections

Each summer of the Masters' program inspired me. It helped me to create new or more in-depth ways to help my students grow as young musicians. I have learned how to create seemingly small simple lessons that add up to big complex ideas in natural sequence that inspire confidence and a love of music in my students. I love that I finished classes with a clearly expressed idea of how to take what was discussed and learned and apply it to my daily teaching experience. "Arranging for Bands" required us to arrange a piece for band and Dr. Lubaroff showed us his process of mapping out a piece of music. I had been looking for ways to create compositional experiences for my students. This class helped me work out how to create natural composing or arranging moments for my students at all levels. I wanted them to be as comfortable with writing and manipulating music as they were playing music off the page. This led to me having fifth graders doing simple 3-minute notation work and composing one note songs. At the high school level, it led to developing a system for the whole class to arrange a song together. This is a project I still do every spring.

My second summer added more layers to my thought and teaching process. My final paper in "Organization and Administration of the Successful Music Program" had three ideas: Eighth Grade Band Day, Ensemble Week, and Foundational Assessments (which became Checkpoints). These were all actions I wanted to try this year based on the readings and discussions we had as a class. Eighth Grade Band Day came out of discussions about *The Dynamic Marching Band* (Markworth, 2008). My colleagues and I have wanted to reach out to eighth graders, but finding a practical, "will work in the real lives of our student's" idea wasn't happening. While reading and talking about the recruitment piece in class, I thought, "What if we did it during the day instead of night? What about on Wednesday when we have extended blocks

of time?” We had our first Eighth Grade Band Day on Wednesday, February 6. We bussed all the eighth-grade band kids from the three middle schools to the high school. They met each other, received customized folders with the handbook and other program information inside, rehearsed with the Director of Bands, met our student leaders for a question/answer period during lunch, watched the beginning of our Wind Ensemble rehearsal, and then played with the Wind Ensemble. Our freshmen enrollment is for next year is 79 students (17% of their class), up from the 49 freshman (11% of their class) we had this past fall.

Ensemble Week was inspired by discussions about music fundamentals and the need for quality literature that happened in “History of the Wind Band” as well as “Organization and Administration of a Successful Music Program”. I wanted to encourage my students to take an ensemble to Regional Festival and expose my students to a wider selection of composers they had not played before in band. *Habits of Successful Musicians* (Rush, 2006) encouraged me to try student ensembles during class time, so I took a week in late January to break my class into a flute choir, clarinet choir, saxophone choir, trumpet choir, horn trio, low brass choir, and percussion ensemble. All groups had their music chosen for them, but they were responsible for rehearsing the piece together and getting it ready for a Friday performance for the class. Composers performed included Mozart, Sibelius, Khachaturian, and Haydn. The Friday performance was impressive. The students didn’t always realize how far they had come, but all the directors agreed that the musical growth of the groups over the course of the week was exciting to witness. In the future, I need to create more support for ensembles who decide they would like to try to go on to Regionals, but I will have an Ensemble week again next year.

My experiences and discussions during “History of the Wind Bands” also has me holding myself more accountable for the composers chosen and presented to my high school students.

The need to support composers and widen the works being performed by bands was brought home by discussions of commissions by other directors in class as well as national organizations. I am not ready to commission a piece, but I do want to support composers doing good work. For our May Concert, I made sure I had a repertoire diverse in styles and composers for my students to play. We performed a piece in a jazz style, *8th Street Bowery Blues* by Jeremy Bell (2018), a class arrangement of three popular 80's tunes for their arranging project, a slow piece, *Pax* by Catherine McMichael (2005), and a march, *Quicksilver* by William Owens (2018). *8th Street Bowery Blues* (Bell, 2018) and the arrangement were foregone conclusions for this performance by late February. I went looking for composers who had quality works of appropriate styles and difficulty levels for my ensemble and who did not look like Carl Strommen, Sean O'Loughlin, or Bill Locklear, whose pieces we played on our March concert.

In "History of the Wind Band" we talked about how foundational marches were for band literature and performances for many years. They were popular with audiences and players alike. They were performed in a variety of ways and written for many occasions. William Owens is a composer my students have not played many works by. *Quicksilver (Galop)* (Owens, 2018), while written in 2018, contains all the classic elements of a circus march. I shared with my students the history of marches in the development of concert groups. A student commented on how part of it sounded like their previous school's fight song, and then we talked about where fight songs come from. The other composer I chose was Catherine McMichael. She has a concert band piece called *Pax* (McMichael, 2005), that is a slower ballad. This piece, while listed as a grade 2, has some leaps in the brass and challenging part writing for all. I thought this would be a good piece for stressing part independence within sections, as well as beautiful tone and musicianship. Without taking "History of the Wind Band", I don't know if I would have pushed

myself to spend the time to find quality composers first and then see if any of their works fit in the program I wanted for the students and the audience. It was worth the time. The students loved *Quicksilver* (Owens, 2018) and I had a parent comment after the concert that *Pax* (McMichael, 2005) was his favorite piece of the night.

“Theories of Music Education” reinforced so many ideas and created new ones. My “Theories of Music Education” discussions and final paper had me reexamining how I teach and the way I present new information to students. It was interesting to hear all my classmates present about the different theories. I found some overlapping thoughts, new ideas and support for what I currently do. I was intrigued by the idea, supported by Kodaly and brain research, of starting with the concept first and then going to symbols. I teach in a district with a strong general music program. My students start band with a strong sense of song and rhythm. I wanted to try a more brain based, constructivist approach. On the first day of fifth grade band this year, I wanted them to feel successful and capable of learning anything required for band class. We began by drawing. I learned in this class that the brain goes from image to print, so I thought if we could draw our musical concepts as a class, it would be less overwhelming when we combined them together and tried to play music on our instruments. We started with five lines. Most drew a staff, because they made that connection on their own. We talked about how a staff works for pitches. We drew an x where a high sound would be and then another x where a low sound would be. They then added four more x’s, either high or low or a combination on their own. This allowed them to add their own creative thoughts, which made it more personable and memorable. Next, we added a physical motion to reinforce the concept in our brain. A high sound was “played” by snapping above your head and a low sound was “played” using a foot tap. We then “played” our music all at the same time. We talked about the differences we heard

and drew on the big white board at the front what those differences looked like on the staff so that all students could see them. Some people had created patterns while others used repetition. We continued using our boards and bodies to practice note shapes for whole, half, and quarter notes. The educational learning theory behind this lesson was all about students creating personalized meaning through actions for the music symbols that they will see first when beginning to play an instrument. The inspiration for this approach came from creating a presentation for class that included a sample lesson plan of what brain-based learning would look like in an actual classroom. Before this class, I had the students take a pre-test on the first day of band, so I could have some hard data about their prior knowledge. While helpful to me in showing student growth, it was not motivating or necessarily creating the stage for future learning.

The Masters' of Music program has allowed me to focus and try new ideas based on solid educational theory. Taking little ideas and growing them into larger projects or more complex performances helps students to learn and remember. Music connects across social and emotional boundaries. It can provide challenges and reassurances to students. I am grateful for my time here and my chance to grow into a teacher who challenges students to be their best while providing a clear path to get there.

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