

The Orff method within the self-contained special education class

by

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Abstract

For my project, I focused on incorporating the Orff methodology within a self-contained special education class. I used musical stories to incorporate movement, response to musical ideas, creating instruments and playing them, and dramatic play into our class. The demographic of this class was made up of children ranging in age from seven to eleven with varying levels of intellectual disabilities. The students listened to a story, completed an activity and then responded to a second reading. The first story we did was “Moonglow Roll-O-Rama” by Dav Pilkey (1995). The students each created an animal mask to wear and used paper plates under their feet as roller skates. While I read the book, the students acted out the story. When it came time to roller skate I played a recording of Beethoven’s *Piano Sonata No. 14 Op. 27 No. 2 in C-Sharp Minor “Moonlight”* performed by Daniel Barenboim for the students to skate and react to (1987). The following class I used the book “Listen to the Rain” by Bill Martin Jr (1988). We created shakers out of paper cups, tape, and dried beans to play while reading the story. The students needed to respond to the story as it was being read. When there was a drizzle, they lightly shook their shakers. When it was pouring, they made the shakers sound as loud as possible. I was so impressed at how the students were able to respond to the music and the stories in both lessons. They were able to follow directions, complete the tasks with only a little help from me and the paras, and respond appropriately to the music and stories. They showed tremendous growth from the beginning of the school year to the day that I filmed the lesson with their ability to listen to, interpret, and react to musical ideas.

In my time at Kansas State University Master’s of Music program, I have grown as a music educator in many different ways. The biggest development that I have made is incorporating more of the Orff and Dalcroze methodology into my elementary general music

teaching. I had always been nervous to attempt those methods of teaching but learning more about the benefits of both methods gave me the confidence to incorporate it into my lessons. Since incorporating these methods with my students I have noticed a significant improvement in their abilities, confidence, and engagement. Another change I have made was incorporating different musical skills into the students' performances. Instead of hosting a concert where the students sing the entire time in choral style, I have started hosting an “informance” where they demonstrate sight reading, melodic training, singing, playing instruments, and movement. I even have the whole audience join in for a group folk dance to close out the concert. Without the experience I have had at Kansas State, I never would have thought of showcasing all of those different skills in a performance.

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Dedication

This project is dedicated to my husband and children who inspire me daily to be a better teacher and for supporting me on this journey.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

From the outside, formal education is viewed as a way to prepare children for the next phase of life. It is meant to produce productive members of society. Preschool prepares children for elementary school, elementary school prepares children for middle school, middle school prepares children for high school, high school prepares students for college or vocational school, and college and vocational school prepares students to contribute to society. The process of formal education is to prepare a student to step out into the world ready to produce a skill or a service for their community. In *Kohlberg's Theory of Moral Development in Adolescence*, Brett Grell describes modern formal education as a way to “develop an informed and productive workforce through a system that allows for social mobility” (2022, p. 1). While I do agree that our jobs as educators is to prepare our students for the next phase of life and give them skills that will develop a productive and informed workforce, I feel that there is much more to education than just creating a cog in the wheel of the workplace. We need to help develop a well rounded person. Our job is to teach the whole child. If a child knows how to read and write but does not know how to think critically, ask questions, treat others with kindness and empathy, or have the ability to work with others, I do not believe we have set them up successfully for the next stage of their life.

In the chapter “What Do You Believe About Learning and Teaching?” from *The Journey from Music Student to Teacher* by Raiber and Teachout, they compare schools to different places through metaphors (2022, p. 27-31). The comparison is made to a factory and a museum. For a long time education was treated like a factory. Every student was treated the same, the information was delivered in a single format, and no matter what a child’s learning style might be or if they had a disability, they were expected to learn and achieve like the rest of their peers.

The factory needed to turn out a product, future workers. This factory approach to education worked for some but not for all. The students were expected to learn what the teacher presents with no influence on what is being taught or how it is delivered. In the museum metaphor, the students are viewers in the museum and the teachers are the docents that guide the students through their learning. The viewers, or students, are able to linger at the things that they are interested in, asking questions and learning more. When we are setting our students up for the next phase of their lives, we need to think about the skills and qualities we want them to possess and decide if a factory or museum approach would help them achieve it. In my classroom, my goal is to create critical thinkers who are not afraid to take risks, try new things, be vulnerable, ask questions, and dive deeper into topics of interest. Those qualities cannot be encouraged in a factory setting.

The schools that I have been a part of in my teaching career are adopting more of a museum approach to teaching and learning as opposed to the factory approach. While the schools are trying to allow for more freedom, a more inquisitive nature, and being mindful of the students' social and emotional health and well being, they are all still bound by state testing. This limits how much free reign the teachers have in their classrooms. On the other hand, some teachers are stuck in the factory mindset and push back against the museum approach. This tug of war makes it difficult to give students a consistent experience from class to class and year to year. The requirements and weight of state testing drive the discussion from policy makers and the decisions that they make. The stress of having the students perform well on a standardized test forces teachers to teach to the test and limits their ability to encourage the inquisitive nature of their students. I teach in Arizona where there is currently an attack against public education and teachers. The new state superintendent will not allow teachers to work on social and

emotional learning with their students and has even set up a hotline for parents to report teachers that they suspect are addressing the students social and emotional health. How are teachers expected to produce healthy, productive members of society if they cannot teach the whole child? How can we be expected to prepare students for the next phase of life while coming out of a global pandemic but we cannot help the students process through it? These are all things that the lawmakers and stake-holders need to consider when they are choosing to send us back to the factory-only style of teaching and learning. Abraham Maslow believed that people cannot reach their full potential without their basic needs being met (Panka, 2022). Maslow developed a hierarchy of needs that outlines what basic needs need to be met before self-actualization can occur. The students' physiological, safety, love and belonging, and esteem needs all must be met before children are able to strive to become the best that they can be. Teachers understand the importance of meeting the students' basic needs in order for them to be able to reach their full potential in school, and a big part of that is meeting their social and emotional needs. "Schools that have effective social-emotional learning (SEL) programs are better able to meet students' esteem and love and belonging needs than those that don't" (ibid., p. 1). The lawmakers in Arizona are tying the teachers hands by refusing to allow social and emotional learning. Music education has the unique ability of connecting with students in a way that no other subject can. Music teachers naturally address social and emotional learning through their class. In my classroom, I teach how you need to express emotions when you perform music and we work on identifying the emotions that composers were trying to convey in their pieces. We work on turn taking, respect, sharing, inclusion, acceptance of differences, and understanding cultures other than our own. Addressing social and emotional learning is interwoven into the music classroom so deeply that I cannot see how lawmakers can remove it.

Music education, similarly to formal education, also helps prepare students for the next phase of life. But instead of solely focusing on how a child will grow into a worker, it helps them grow into smart, compassionate, problem solving, kind, empathetic, team oriented, and hard working adults. These desirable attributes are developed by the skills learned in the music classroom. If a student is a member of a performing ensemble, they need to learn how to work with others to create the best music possible. This develops their ability to be kind, empathetic, and team oriented. Learning music from different cultures also develops one's ability to show compassion and empathy. Learning to sing or play an instrument is not an easy task that requires hard work and dedication that shapes a person's work ethic as they get older. While elementary music prepares students for the performing ensembles available to them in middle and high school and the performing ensembles prepare students for music making in the community, that same music education helps develop the brain in ways that no other activity can, creating positive effects on all areas of one's life. Several years ago, shortly after I began my teaching career, I came across a photo online with a quote from Cheryl Lavender that said "The fact that children make beautiful music is less significant than the fact that music can make beautiful children" and gave me the "why" of how I would approach teaching. I do believe the biggest benefit of music education is how it shapes who the child grows up to be. According to the article *Important Benefits of Music In Our Schools* (2014), not only can studying music create wonderful musicians and improve academic success, it can also help students to be more emotionally developed and have empathy towards other cultures, develop language and reasoning, develop mastery of memorization, improve motor skills, stay engaged in school, successfully contribute to society, have higher self esteem, and cope with anxiety. Music helps others connect with humanity which makes them more empathetic towards others. Students who

study music develop their math and pattern-recognition skills, build intellectual curiosity, learn discipline, develop out of the box thinking and problem solving, develop spatial intelligence, and have better self-confidence. I believe that the role of music education is to create musical opportunities that help teach students musical skills to use in and out of our classroom while also helping to teach them how to be kind, caring, empathetic, and productive example setters out in the world.

Teaching elementary music for the past six years has shown me that I need to educate others on the “why” of music education. For my first five years of teaching, I was able to prove my worth to my principal by growing my band and choir programs to the biggest programs in the school district all while creating positive connections with each of the students in my school. My principal was not concerned with the connections I made even though that is why I was able to build such a large program, he was only concerned with the size of my program. Even with that success, he did not ever see why what I was doing was valuable beyond giving him something to brag about to the district. I would still get pulled to substitute in other classes on a regular basis and assemblies would always get scheduled during specials time to not infringe on instructional time for the classroom teachers. At one point the assistant principal told me that me and my special area team members were not her priority, the other teachers on campus were. They did not understand how a quality music education for the students would positively affect the students in all areas of their lives. Other schools in the district with smaller band programs stopped allowing the teachers to offer band class during the day while only one other school allowed choir to be offered as a class two days a week. Music teachers at every school spent more days substitute teaching in other classrooms than teaching music each week through the entire school year. The students missed out on the ability to benefit from music education

because of the lack of importance that the administrator put on their class. This lack of understanding is what leads music programs to get cut and underfunded all over the country.

Learning about the history of music education and the cycle of relevance and dismissal that it is perpetually on has helped shape my philosophy of music education. Society only values music education when it is able to be utilized broadly. *A History of American Music Education* by Michael L. Mark and Charles L. Gary discusses the cycle that has gone on throughout time. Beginning with Moses, the first music educator, music was seen as a service to God so everyone was required to participate in it (2007, p. 4). The need for music was mainly to worship God with it. Worshiping God being the main reason music was studied by the masses is a trend that has lasted throughout time. With church attendance currently at an all time low and the way music is delivered in a majority of churches no longer requires reading notation, I am afraid society will not see the value in music education as we currently know it for much longer and the cycle will continue to repeat itself. This strictly utilitarian view of formal education and music education does not allow for society to see the importance of the individual student and what they gain from an education that is student centered. Helping society understand the value to each individual person with the “museum” approach to both formal and music education could help break us out of the cycle of appreciation-devaluation-appreciation-devaluation that we have been stuck in throughout time.

Estelle Jorgensen (1997) believes that the current education system is a factory-production model that sets students and teachers up to fail. I believe that some schools are trying to reimagine what schooling should look like but will never be able to successfully move away from that model when standardized testing is in place and determines funding for the schools. I

agree with Jorgensen that the factory approach to education, in any subject, does not set anyone up for success. I also agree with Jorgensen's views that music is for all and by all and should be inclusive and diverse.

Elliot Eisner shared similar ideas that schools should not be treated like factories in *The kind of schools we need: Personal Essays* on leaving the factory approach behind. He stated "Educational programs, I learned from the arts, should not be modeled after the standardized procedures of the factory; the studio is a better image" (1998, p.68). Eisner let the arts influence a lot of his views on education. One way that stuck out to me is that the process of working on a problem has its own intrinsic rewards that are just as important as the outcome. I agree wholeheartedly with that. Not every musical endeavor will end in a masterpiece and not everyone who studies music education will become a professional musician one day. The process of learning music and experiencing creating music with an ensemble provides each individual with a sense of more self esteem, pride, and personal satisfaction and accomplishment. Those intrinsic rewards given by music education are invaluable to a person, even if they do not choose to pursue music as a career.

Christopher Small believed that music should be removed from the classroom and be offered in community music centers and that a child should have a choice if they wanted to be taught about music or not (*Christopher Small Obituary* , 2011). I believe that if a child is interested in music then we should be encouraging them to pursue additional musical opportunities beyond the music classroom, but I think a child would miss out on something incredible if they chose not to ever walk in the door of a music classroom and students who would not have access to the music centers would never be able to have a chance to experience

music education at all. I believe that his idea takes the complete opposite view of the factory idea but pushes it too far to where the students might not be exposed to music education at all.

On the surface music is sound organized in rhythmic and/or melodic patterns. But music is more than that. Music is healing. Music saves lives. Music connects us to each other. Music reaches our souls. Music education is a lifeline to students. It builds confidence, creates community, shows students that it is ok to make mistakes, teaches lifelong lessons, and makes the world better. It exposes children to cultures that they might not have exposure to otherwise. Focusing on each child and how they will grow into better people because of their music education is vital. They are not cogs in a wheel, they are each unique with something vitally important to gain through their musical education. If they go on to continue to participate in performing ensembles or just appreciate music as adults, their music education can still play an important part in shaping them into kind, compassionate, empathetic, and productive members of society. Music education is not an optional extracurricular activity, it is a necessity to create a better society as a whole.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

I believe that my philosophy of music education informs my teaching mainly by allowing me to see how each child learns and allowing them to experience music in a way that fits them. I think creating relationships with all of my students allows me to inspire and excite them to be in my classroom. It creates a space for them to be willing to try new things, take risks, and make mistakes which is important when learning how to create music and how to navigate the world as adults. I believe that my philosophy of music education allows me to connect with my students in the self-contained special education setting. This has helped them each develop their musical abilities, confidence, self esteem, and has allowed them to find their voices. My students are not

just cogs in a wheel or a product of a factory production line. They are each unique musicians and it is my job to help every one of them reach their full potential.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

I taught the following two lessons to a self-contained special education class for students with intellectual disabilities. There were 14 students in the class that ranged in ages from seven to eleven years old but not all students would come to class each day depending on their push in schedule with the general education classroom or when they would get pulled out for speech and occupational therapies. The class would attend with three paraprofessionals to assist the students. All of the students had individual education plans that had varying levels of accommodations and modifications needed. Some students were unable to read or write while others were close to achieving grade level standards. A few students had emotional and behavioral disabilities also. This wide range of abilities made planning whole group instruction difficult so I always looked for activities that could engage all of the students and work on meaningful musical skills for everyone. All of the students responded well to being read to and they enjoyed the physical aspect of musical stories when I introduced them to the process and clarified the expectations with it earlier in the year.

The goal of the two lesson plans that I taught were to incorporate musical stories into my self-contained special education classes to encourage movement, response to musical ideas, and dramatic play along with focusing on gross and fine motor skills by creating masks and instruments. I always try to work on students' individual education plan, or IEP, goals whenever I can in my classroom. A majority of the students in this self contained class have occupational therapy services so incorporating the creation of masks and instruments into the class period, it allowed me to help support what they are working towards with their occupational therapy goals. Working on these goals also helps the students in the music classroom by strengthening their hands and eye-hand coordination that is important when learning to play instruments and

participate in movement activities. I incorporated coloring, cutting, and taping animal masks and shakers to work on these goals.

During the two lessons, the students learned how to respond to the stories being told and music being played by internalizing it and moving their bodies in response. They learned to move their bodies in a legato manner to match the music they heard and they played shakers to interpret dynamics in appropriate ways. Because several students in the class have processing delays I read the stories first for each lesson before adding a musical element to it. This modification allowed all of the students in my class a chance to be successful with the learning goals. During the lesson focused on the story *Moonglow Roll-O-Rama* by Dav Pilkey (1995), the students used their bodies to act out the story and skate on paper plates when the music was played. The one sentence in the story describes how the animals laced up their skates and the students responded to that cue by standing on their paper plate “skates” to get ready to skate. They had to move their bodies in a legato manner to the recorded music when it was played. When the music stopped, the students had to stop skating and start responding to the text again. The next class we did another musical story, this time to *Listen to the Rain* by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault (1988). For this lesson, the students built shakers out of cups, tape, and dried beans. While I read the story for a second time, the students played their shakers to match the dynamics of the rain that the story was describing, shaking pianissimo for the drizzling rain and fortissimo for the raging storm. The instructional strategies I used for these lessons were direct instruction, demonstration, project based learning, and Kagan strategies to close the lesson. I used observation for my assessment of the lessons.

Lesson Plan 1

<p>Learning Intention: <i>concept/skills emphasized</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Singing -Pitch Matching -Tone -Moving -Listening 	<p>National Music Standards (2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music - Listening to, analyzing, and describing music 	<p>Success Criteria: <i>I'll know I'll be successful when I...</i> Experience pulse, same/different, body awareness and dramatic play through a musical story. I will create an animal mask using crayons, scissors, tape, and staples. I will respectfully listen to a story being read to me and respond with my body to the story and music.</p>
<p>Review: Welcome song, classroom expectations, and procedures.</p>	<p>Arizona Standard (2023): MU.PR.4.Kb b. With appropriate guidance, explore and demonstrate musical contrasts of music selected for performance (e.g. high/low, loud/soft, same/different, and fast/slow).</p>	<p>Assessment: Observation</p>

<p>Materials Needed: Piano, speaker, music, <i>Moonglow Roll-O-Rama</i> by Dav Pilkey (1995), Animal mask coloring pages, clipboards, scissors, strips of paper, staples, tape, and paper plates</p>	<p>Vocabulary: Safe, respectful, responsible, kind, Beethoven, musical story</p>
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<p>I do-I demonstrate a musical phrase.</p>
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We do- We practice it together.

You do- Students perform independently while I monitor for understanding.

Act 1/Review: Review procedure for coming into the classroom, classroom expectations, and bathroom expectations. 3 minutes

Review the welcome song by modeling, echoing, and singing in unison “Welcome all my Friends”. 1-2 minutes

Read aloud Moonglow Roll-O-Rama 5 minutes

Transition: Get out supplies to create masks

Act 2: Create animal masks for the musical story using the mask printouts, crayons, scissors, strips of paper, tape, and staples. 15 minutes

Transition: Clean up mask supplies. Hand out two paper plates per student and show them how to stand on them to “Skate”. Explain that they do not stand on the plates until the book tells them to lace up their roller skates.

Act 3: Reread *Moonglow Roll-O-Rama* while the students act out the story. When it comes time to roller skate, turn on Beethoven’s Piano Sonata No. 14 "Moonlight" in C sharp minor performed by Daniel Barenboim (1987).

Notes/Extensions/Exit: End Class by using Stand up-Hand-up-Pair up to share with a partner how they used a musical story to reach their success criteria of the day. Collect paper plates and review line up procedures.

Accommodations: Accommodations will be offered to students who need it by way of color-coding, using icons, incorporating movement to teach rhythm or pitches, utilizing technology, using visual aids, specific seating next to someone helpful, provide different modalities to present information to students, and have the children produce work samples in different modalities to check for understanding.

Modifications: Modifications will be provided to students who need it i.e. students can show musical concepts with movement if they are unable to sing, I will sing or play along with them if they are struggling to do it on their own, if the class is doing a harder rhythm pattern, the student needing modification will pat the “Ta” while the class pats the more complex rhythm like “Ta-Ka-Di-Mi”.

Extensions: Students will be given the opportunity to compose and/or perform solo for their peers.

Figure 1 Lesson Plan

Lesson Plan 2

<p>Learning Intention: <i>concept/skills emphasized</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Singing -Pitch Matching -Tone -Instruments -Listening 	<p>National Music Standards (2014):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Singing, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music -Performing on instruments, alone and with others, a varied repertoire of music - Listening to, analyzing, and describing music 	<p>Success Criteria: <i>I'll know I'll be successful when I...</i> Experience dynamics and unpitched percussion through a musical story. I will create a shaker using crayons, paper cups, beans, and tape. I will respectfully listen to a story being read to me and respond with my body to the story and music.</p>
<p>Review: Welcome song, classroom</p>	<p>Arizona Standard (2023): MU.PR.4.Kb</p>	<p>Assessment: Observation</p>

expectations, and procedures.	b. With appropriate guidance, explore and demonstrate musical contrasts of music selected for performance (e.g. high/low, loud/soft, same/different, and fast/slow).	
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Materials Needed: Piano, speaker, music, <i>Listen to the Rain</i> by Bill Martin Jr. (1988), cups, beans, tape, crayons	Vocabulary: Safe, respectful, responsible, kind, rain stick, shaker.
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I do- I demonstrate a musical phrase.
We do- We practice it together.
You do- Students perform independently while I monitor for understanding.

Act 1/Review: Review procedure for coming into the classroom, classroom expectations, and bathroom expectations. 3 minutes
Review the welcome song by modeling, echoing, and singing in unison. 1-2 minutes
Read *Listen to the Rain* by Bill Martin Jr. 5 minutes

Transition: Get out supplies to make shakers

Act 2: Demonstrate how to make shakers and have students assemble and decorate their own. Paraprofessionals may need to help assist some students when assembling them. 15 minutes

Transition: Clean up shaker supplies

Act 3: Practice playing shakers at different dynamics. 5 minutes

Reread *Listen to the Rain* and have the students play their shakers at the appropriate volume to match how hard the rain is coming down. 5 minutes

Notes/Extensions/Exit: End Class by using Stand up-Hand-up-Pair up to share with a partner how they used a musical story to reach their success criteria of the day. Remind students to put their shakers in their backpacks when they get to class and review line up procedures.

Accommodations: Accommodations will be offered to students who need it by way of color-coding, using icons, incorporating movement to teach rhythm or pitches, utilizing technology, using visual aids, specific seating next to someone helpful, provide different modalities to present information to students, and have the children produce work samples in different modalities to check for understanding.

Modifications: Modifications will be provided to students who need it i.e. students can show musical concepts with movement if they are unable to sing, I will sing or play along with them if they are struggling to do it on their own, if the class is doing a harder rhythm pattern, the student needing modification will pat the “Ta” while the class pats the more complex rhythm like “Ta-Ka-Di-Mi”.

Extensions: Students will be given the opportunity to compose and/or perform solo for their peers.

Figure 2 Lesson Plan

The students loved the musical stories I did each day and enjoyed the hands-on aspect of creating masks and instruments to go with each lesson. One adjustment I would make to the lessons moving forward would be to have some of the mask supplies prepped a little more to cut down on wait time for the students. Having unnecessary wait time can lead to students

disengaging with the lesson, classroom management issues, or flight risks with some of the students in the population to whom I was teaching the lesson. Another adjustment I would make to the lesson is to expand each lesson by a day and add an improvisation activity with the barred instruments to go along with each story. The students in this class could handle the freedom and challenge of that type of extension of the activity with the assistance from myself and the paraprofessionals that came to class with them.

Teaching music to self-contained special education classes with students of varying levels of intellectual disabilities brought with it a different experience than teaching strictly general education classes. The students thrived on very structured activities. My first attempt at doing a musical story with this particular class in the very beginning of the year did not go as smoothly as I would have liked. They had never experienced anything like a musical story before and the freedom that came from moving about the room was a bit too much in the beginning. I was determined not to give up and just continued to get to know the students, build relationships with them, and help them get comfortable with my style of teaching. I learned that I needed to explain things in great detail and give examples of what I was looking for. Once I felt comfortable with the students and they felt comfortable with me, I knew it was time to try introducing musical stories to them again. I made sure that I set clear expectations, I demonstrated examples of how I would respond to different musical cues, and we practiced together repeatedly. I would do mini-musical stories where for a minute we would pretend we were giants and fairies. I would assign half the class as giants and the other half as fairies and I would come up with a quick story about how the fairies had to sneak through Giantland without getting caught. I would play loud descending notes for the giants' cue to walk and high pitched trills for the fairies to fly. Doing short little activities like this helped the students understand

how they had to listen and respond to the cues. After they had experience with this and were successfully able to handle the mini-musical stories I was able to start using story books. At first I tried just reading the story and having the music and movement elements be a part of the activity all at once but quickly realized that was too overwhelming for some of my students. That is when I decided to always gather the students to sit around me while I read the story and showed them the illustrations before adding the musical component on the second reading. This made the activity fun and engaging for all of my students. Seeing how successful these lessons were helped me to see how positive of an impact the musical story experience had on their learning. It expanded my thinking and teaching to where it gave me the confidence and knowledge of how to best approach musical stories with my other two self-contained special education classes who had more severe disabilities than this class. It showed me how capable my students were and how they can achieve whatever I put in front of them as long as I set them up in the best possible way to reach the goals I set for them.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

The Kansas State University Master's of Music program has helped me grow as a music educator in a variety of ways. The biggest development that I have made in my approach to teaching elementary general music is incorporating more of the Orff and Dalcroze methodology. Before my time at Kansas State, I was always too nervous to attempt those methods of teaching but learning more about the benefits of both methods gave me the confidence to incorporate it into my lessons. Since incorporating these methods with my students I have noticed a significant improvement in their abilities, confidence, and engagement and a significant improvement in my confidence as an educator.

For the first three years of my teaching career I did not have any barred instruments to incorporate into my lessons. After asking my school to purchase a few instruments and being told no repeatedly, I finally purchased 5 glockenspiels myself to use in my classes. The following two years I would pull them out occasionally but was not sure what would be the most effective way to add the instruments to the lessons I was teaching. This past year I switched school districts and started teaching at a new elementary school where they purchased a class set of Orff instruments for me. It included bass, alto, and soprano xylophones and metallophones along with alto and soprano glockenspiels. My courses at Kansas State helped show me different activities to use to get started and I am so pleased with how it shaped this past school year. I have been able to incorporate the instruments into almost every lesson, begin to incorporate melodic composition and improvisation, get the students excited to come to music class, and see them develop a deeper understanding of the concepts being taught.

I was introduced to the book *Music for Children Vol. 1 Pentatonic* (Murray et al., 1976) during my time at Kansas State University. When I went back into the classroom after learning

how to use this resource, it was a game changer. I used this book to enhance my lessons with recorder, barred instruments, and improvisation. For an activity, I would open the book to a random page, play a line from the page, and the students would come up with lyrics to add to the song. My first and second graders loved this activity and would create some of the most incredible songs. Before going through my master's program I never tried that type of improvisation especially with six and seven year olds.

The use of musical stories changed my classroom over the course of my master's program. When the students would see me walk to my bookshelf they would cheer. They loved being read to to begin with but adding instruments, movement, and singing to the stories made it even better. I went a little overboard researching books that would be good to use for musical stories and purchased more than I could incorporate throughout this past year. The students loved incorporating musical stories into our week. I have always read to my students but developing that from just incorporating a read aloud that connected to what I was teaching to immersing them into a musical story was a journey I am so glad I went on. The students were able to use their imaginations, practice pulse, pitch matching, improvisation, and movement all while learning how to express emotions through movement and music. Musical stories helped me grow as a music educator through my time at Kansas State.

Rhythm and Movement: Applications of Dalcroze Eurhythmics by Elsa Findlay (1995) was introduced in my first summer as a graduate student at Kansas State. I had taken a Dalcroze class in 2002 but had not thought much about it until I started my master's program in 2021. I immediately fell in love with this method and knew I would incorporate what I was learning as soon as I was back in the classroom. I was worried that I would be met with resistance from the students but I got quite the opposite reaction. The students loved all of the movement and

freedom that came along with the activities. While the students loved the activities, I loved seeing the benefits that came from incorporating more movement into our daily activities. I noticed that the students were able to internalize tempo, keep a steady beat, respond to dynamic, tempo, meter, and note value changes, and interpret musical expression.

Dalcroze shook up my thought process and teaching once more after my second summer in the master's program when I was introduced to *plastique animée* for the first time. I was intrigued by the way movement would express the human emotion of a song through movement with or without additional props. I have been a dancer and choreographer for almost three decades so *plastique animée* drew me in immediately. It challenged my thinking though because it is more than just choreographing steps to counts, it is internalizing the music and expressing it through various means. I decided to try a few lessons with my fourth and fifth grade classes after learning about *plastique animée*. I was very nervous about how open the students would be to this experience. One thing working against me was the fact that in the years before I started, students only had music class for kindergarten, first, and second grade. The fifth graders had not had music in three years so they gave me a lot of push back in the beginning of the class. I had to earn their trust and get them excited to experience music class again before I felt confident enough to ask them to experience a *plastique animée* lesson. The students seemed resistant at first but once I put them into groups to start working through the activity they went from creating movements as a joke to intentional movements, to making really beautiful expressions of the piece of music we were working with. I let them all choose if they wanted to use any props or just movement. Some groups chose scarves, some groups chose tennis balls, some groups chose bean bags, some groups chose all three, and some groups chose none. It was amazing to watch

their walls come down and see them take the activity seriously by the end. It became an activity that they would repeatedly ask to do through the school year.

The final development that I made as a general music educator was adjusting what the performances would look like for my students. Part of this was out of necessity because the school I worked in this past year had me meet with students every day of the week for one quarter and then I would not see them again for the rest of the school year. The school district adopted this schedule during covid and never changed it back. This made it impossible to do a holiday program in December and a spring program in May like they used to structure it. I needed to host two concerts per quarter, one for kindergarten through second grade and the other for third through fifth grade. Instead of hosting a concert where the students sing the entire time in choral style, I started hosting an “informance” where they demonstrate sight reading, melodic training, singing, playing instruments, and movement. This allowed the students to show off a little bit of each skill we worked on during the quarter. I was proud of each grade and how their music literacy grew through the quarter along with their love of music so getting to showcase all of those skills was incredible to watch. The families enjoyed seeing all of the different aspects of their children’s music education. I even had the whole audience join in for a group folk dance to close out each concert. Each concert ended with a lot of laughs and smiles. I can guarantee many of those in the audience did not expect to be dancing that night but they happily did and I could see they were thrilled to be a part of the concert.

The biggest area of growth that I have had during my time at Kansas State University is my self confidence. I am proud of the teacher I have become thanks to the courses I took in the master’s program. I understand the why behind what is taught at a deeper level. I have gained the courage to try new approaches, activities, and methods that I was too nervous to try before. It

gave me the confidence to add activities to the music curriculum that the district uses to enhance the skills being taught each day. I have been able to create an inclusive and accessible curriculum for three self-contained special education classes because of the knowledge I have gained through the Master's of Music program. Kansas State University has shaped my teaching in a way that I and my students will be able to benefit from for years to come.

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