

# **Music and mood in the ensemble setting**

by

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## **Abstract**

The lessons demonstrated in this report are focused on applying the mood of a piece to the music. This set of lessons was developed with my teaching philosophy and my school districts interest in Conscious Discipline in mind. Conscious Discipline (2021) is a classroom management program for schools that focuses on social emotional learning for the students. I have found this classroom management plan to be very successful in helping students control their emotions and quell any potential big issues that may arise. But I have had a hard time finding ways to incorporate it into the ensemble setting without causing major disruptions to rehearsals. This set of lessons was designed to introduce students to emotions in music and allow them to explore how they can vent their emotions into their music while they play. This set of lessons was done with all my 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students in both band and orchestra classes. As a result of these lessons, I believe that my students understand how to identify the mood of a piece of music and how to incorporate that mood into their playing. Hopefully they will carry this skill into their musical playing for the rest of their lives.

Throughout my time at Kansas State University, I have developed many new skills and ideas that have helped me in my ensemble teaching in both band and orchestra. Although my focus has been band, I have found that many of the techniques and methodologies can be used in both areas with some minor adjustments. Taking a second look at my teaching philosophy was eye opening for me. I have found that many things have changed since I wrote my original philosophy in undergrad. Now that I have actual teaching experience, I was able to really focus my philosophy on things that matter in the classroom. Part of my teaching philosophy focuses on teaching students to grow up and be able to express themselves emotionally which was a main reason why I developed my mood and music lessons. I was also fascinated with my Curriculum

and Assessment class. While my district provides a guided curriculum for me, it was more intense when I had to create it myself. This allowed me to view curriculum and lessons in a whole new light. When I have adjusted my lesson plans in the past I never focused on the bigger picture. Now, I find myself really thinking about how the adjustments will affect the rest of the year. I have a better sense of what I need to get through and how I should pace the year.

Rehearsal Techniques was also a great class to take. We were able to collaborate and share rehearsal techniques with each other from around the country. It was great to be able to hear what others are doing that works for them and adapt it to use in my own classroom. This class was very practical and allowed me to take ideas and use them immediately.

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# **Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy**

## **Teaching Philosophy**

Having a personal philosophy of education and music is very important for teachers and directors. If a teacher does not have a personal philosophy then it is hard to make concrete decisions in the classroom. Each person's philosophy is different though, based on their background and personal beliefs. Throughout this essay, I will outline my personal philosophy of education, music education, and compare and contrast my beliefs to some of the more prominent music education philosophers.

I firmly believe that education is one of the most important functions of our society. Educators throughout the country are tasked with teaching the future of our society. Students come to school and expect to learn something, most of the time because they are required to. Our job as educators is to prepare them for their futures. Educators should be teaching students how to become productive members of society. Whether they grow up to become the next president of the United States or whether they work at McDonalds, educators should be preparing students to go out in the real world and thrive. Education should set kids up for success in their future. But moreover, we should be focusing on inspiring students to become learners for life; students who grow up to be curious self-starters. If we teach our students to love to learn, then they will always seek out new opportunities to better themselves. Students will not flounder when met with an obstacle, but will seek new information to overcome said obstacle. In my opinion, education should be focused around creating life-long learners instead of teaching to a test.

Teaching music can be an important facet of the education process. In a broad sense, the value of music education comes from what music inspires in a child. Music is one of the most basic forms of communication when children are growing up. Babies are sung to sleep, toddlers

make musical noises with their toys, and children watch movies or television shows that are centered around music. These forms of music exist because they help children connect to their emotions. Babies who are anxious to sleep away from their parents are lulled to sleep through a melodic song. Toddlers, who bang on items or toys to hear the sounds they make, laugh and giggle at the different noises. Children who watch movies and television shows with music, sing along while clapping and smiling. All of these things teach children how to express themselves which is essential to becoming a well-rounded adult. I want my students to grow up and be able to express themselves in healthy ways that can help lead them to healthy relationships in their futures. Teaching music in a formal school setting allows students to continue this emotional education process.

Music classes also help give students a break from their regular day to day schedules. Art, music, and physical education classes are sometimes the only time in a students day that they get to be active and creative. This allows students a break from a monotonous schedule of sitting at a desk and learning. Especially in music classes, the whole brain is engaged in the act of making music. Music is a one of a kind subject in that way. Allowing students a break to get creative and be active in a classroom setting, is an awesome thing for a child. Even if being active means making authorized noise for one class period a day, the kids go back to class a little bit more focused than when they arrived.

Music education can also help us learn about our culture and different cultures around the world. We grow up hearing the music of our culture throughout our childhoods. Our parents sing it to us and, perhaps, play music on the radio. It is easy for us to grasp the music of our own people. Music education can be beneficial in reaching beyond our own culture and learning about others. There are a lot of polarizing beliefs in today's society and I think it is important to

teach students (through music or not) that beliefs that oppose our own are okay as long as we treat everyone with respect and kindness. Music is a great way to help teach students this lesson. Exposing students to music from other cultures, whether that is across the world or just across the city, is an awesome way for students to connect with each other. It can also show students that music is a universal language that everyone can connect to in some way shape or form.

Most music classes I have attended have also taught me many lessons that I have needed for life that have nothing to do with music. Marching band taught me discipline: how to control my itches and stand still, how to arrive on time to a function, how to stand up straight with good posture, how to present myself with confidence, and how to be a part of a team. Orchestra and concert band taught me how to dress up and look nice for a concert. I apply those lessons each and everyday while getting dressed for work in the morning. Taking private lessons in high school and in college with my professor taught me how to work hard and achieve a goal. I never could have imagined when I started middle school band that I would be presenting a full hour of music at my senior recital by myself. It was an incredibly difficult and rewarding experience. Although these may not be benefits that are music related, music classes can help us learn these lessons so that we can apply them to life. All of my beliefs on why music is important to education stem from the fact that music classes helped me grow into the person I am today; a life-long musician.

I think my ideas of why music education is important directly result from my thoughts about why education is important. In order to help students prepare for their futures, we need to teach them things that can be taught through music. Things such as discipline, worth ethics, timeliness, and proper attire for the workforce. If we want our students to grow up to be productive members of society and have happy, healthy relationships we need to help them learn

how to express themselves. Music helps teach students to express their emotions in a safe environment. Finally, education should inspire students to be life-long learners. I think music is one of the best ways to do that because music is a great way to be involved in learning throughout a whole lifetime. Some things come and go but music is around always.

There are many different beliefs out there about music and music education. My philosophy differs from some of the most prominent music philosophers including those of Chris Small and Estelle Jorgensen. Chris Small has some interesting beliefs about music. On some of his points, I agree with him but there are some issues where I think he takes things to an extreme. Small believes, as do I, that music is primarily an activity. Small takes it a step further by saying that musical works are not things (2012). I disagree with this statement. A piece of music by itself is still music. In order to teach music effectively to a lot of students, we need pieces of music to do that. If musical works were not music, we would not have classes like arranging, instrumentation, or composition. Estelle Jorgensen also has some controversial opinions compared to my philosophy. In the articles that I read about Jorgensen, she pushes quite a bit for a more strictly methodical process of music education, almost like a factory (2011). I do not believe this is the best model of music education. Each of our students is different. We should be catering to our student's differences so that each student gets all that they can from our teaching. We should be teaching to the diversity of our students instead of using a one size fits all model of education. I may disagree with some of their beliefs but both of these philosophers have many great ideas about music and music education.

Although I may disagree with some, there are many philosophers that I agree with such as Elliott Eisner, Bennett Reimer, and David Elliott. Although Elliott Eisner is not a musician, he has many beliefs about the arts that are transferable. Eisner talks about how art exercises the

mind (2002). I wholly believe this and think it is an important factor in music education. Having students exercise their minds fully during the school day is something that we should strive for every day. Sometimes their art classes (band, orchestra, art, choir, etc.) are the only time during their school day that they get to exercise their brain fully. Bennett Reimer also has some great ideas on music education. Reimer believes that music is a balance of the process of making music and music as a piece of work (Mark, 2003). I think this directly relates to music education because most of the secondary music classes today are ensemble classes. These classes have to focus on the balance of making music together and teaching musical concepts. This is the exact balance that Reimer is talking about and I think it is incredibly important in the music classroom. David Elliott is a music philosopher who believes that music should be taught practically in the music classroom. Elliott (2012) believes teaching music is important so we can “...improve human well-being in as many ways as possible- artistic, social, cultural, ethical, political, and so forth” (p. 22). I agree with this statement wholeheartedly. There are so many ways for music to improve us as human beings. We should be teaching subjects and concepts that help our students better themselves and prepare themselves for their future. All three of these philosophers have many great ideas that can be read through and combined to make a really great comprehensive philosophy of music education.

Music and education mean different things for different people. Each individual has their own set of beliefs and they may be different from mine. These are my personal views of education and music education specifically. Education should be one of the focuses of our society because we are teaching the future of our country. As educators we should be teaching students how to prepare themselves for their futures, which include being productive members of society, life-long learners, and setting them up for success in their future lives. Music can play a

really important role in the education of the students in our care. Music helps teach students important life lessons that are not directly related to music but will help them in life. Music can help students express themselves and emote. Music is such an important subject and should be considered so.

### **How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching**

My philosophy of music education focuses heavily on helping students better themselves through music. One of the components of being a successful adult is being able to handle your moods and emotions in a productive way. My lesson plan builds on the idea that a student can correctly identify a mood or emotion. After identifying the emotion, the students learned how to apply it to a piece of music. This will hopefully help them safely express their feelings in a constructive way. The idea is that they can use this technique throughout their whole life when they are feeling certain strong emotions and they can channel those emotions into music.

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

### **Lesson Plan 1**

Date: January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

#### **2014 Music National Standard**

MU:Re8.1.E.5a “Identify interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works, referring to the elements of music, contexts, and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.”  
(National Association for Music Education, 2014).

#### **Prior Knowledge/Skills**

Students are able to listen to a piece of music and evaluate it. Students are able to describe how a piece of music sounds to them.

#### **Rehearsal Objective**

Students will be able to identify the mood of a popular and well-known song by listening to it. Students will be able to either articulate the mood of the song through their words or drawings.

#### **Assessment of the Rehearsal**

Students will be filling out a worksheet as we go through the lesson. Students will be either describing what they hear with their words or drawing it out. I will collect the worksheets at the end of the hour and review them.

#### **Relevant Contextual Factors**

My school has a heavy emphasis on Conscious Discipline (2021) techniques which is all about teaching students to identify their emotions. This is a great lesson for mixing Conscious Discipline and music together in a seamless way. Identifying emotions in music will hopefully help them identify their own emotions.

## **Modifications/Accommodations needed**

I have one SPED student in this class. He always has a paraprofessional with him. He will do the assignment with the rest of the class with additional guidance from his paraprofessional.

## **Instructional materials, resources, & Technology**

Instructional Materials: Whiteboard, marker, Graphic worksheet for Mood and Music (see Figure 2.1 below), extra pencils for students to borrow

Technology: Sound System, YouTube videos of pieces, Laptop

List of Songs Used: The Imperial March- by John Williams (2018), What A Wonderful World- by Louis Armstrong (2020), Pink Panther Theme Song- by Henry Mancini (2014), I'm a Believer- by Smashmouth (2009).



Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ #: \_\_\_\_\_

## Mood

Directions: Draw a picture or write a few words describing what you are thinking or feeling while listening to each song.

<b>Song #1</b>	<b>Song #2</b>
<b>Song #3</b>	<b>Song #4</b>




Figure 2.1 Mood and Music Worksheet

## Rehearsal Plan

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose of Activity</u>	<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
2min	Favorite music and feeling	To identify how their favorite music makes the students feel.	-Introduce mood concept -How does your favorite music (that you listen to in your free time) make you feel?	Informal: Verbal participation in group discussion
5min	List of Mood Words	To turn the feelings we listed in our intro into a list of mood words we can use for the rest of the lesson.	-Talk about two big categories of moods (negative and positive) -Divide the list of feeling words we talked about in the intro into their respective positive or negative columns. -Add any other mood words that fit into the column that we can think of.	Informal: Verbal participation in group discussion
20 min	Listen and React	To use the list of mood words that we made. To listen to songs and identify what mood they are trying to portray.	-Pass out graphic worksheet. -Explain directions: Listen to 4 different songs and write or draw the moods into each of the 4 boxes. Each song gets a separate box. -Listen to snippets of the 4 popular and well-known	Formal: Worksheet

			songs two times. The first time: listen only. The second time: write or draw as you're listening.	
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**Table 2.1 Rehearsal Plan**

## **Lesson Plan 2**

Date: January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **2014 Music National Standard**

**MU:Re8.1.E.8a** “Identify and support interpretations of the expressive intent and meaning of musical works, citing as evidence the treatment of the elements of music, contexts, and (when appropriate) the setting of the text.” (NAfME, 2014).

### **Prior Knowledge/Skills**

Students are able to listen to a piece of music and evaluate it. Students are able to describe how a piece of music sounds to them.

### **Rehearsal Objective**

Students will be able to identify the mood of an orchestral piece of music by listening to it. Students will be able to either articulate the mood of a piece through their words or drawings.

### **Assessment of the Rehearsal**

Students will be filling out a worksheet as we go through the lesson. Students will be either describing what they hear with their words or drawing it out. I will collect the worksheets at the end of the hour and review them.

### **Relevant Contextual Factors**

My school has a heavy emphasis on Conscious Discipline (2021) techniques which is all about teaching students to identify their emotions. This is a great lesson for mixing Conscious Discipline and music together in a seamless way. Identifying emotions in music will hopefully help them identify their own emotions.

## Modifications/Accommodations needed

I have one SPED student in this class. He always has a paraprofessional with him. He will do the assignment with the rest of the class with additional guidance from his paraprofessional.

## Instructional materials, resources, & Technology

Instructional Materials: Whiteboard, marker, Graphic worksheet for Mood and Music, extra pencils for students to borrow

Technology: Sound System, YouTube videos of pieces, Laptop

List of Songs Used: Fantasia on a Theme- by Ralph Vaughan Williams (2020), Marriage of Figaro Overture- by Mozart (2020), 5th Symphony in C Minor- by Beethoven (2012), The Planets-Jupiter- by Holst (2019).

## Rehearsal Plan

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose of Activity</u>	<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
2min	Difference between popular music and classical music	To identify what the differences between their favorite songs and classical orchestral pieces are.	-What are some of your favorite bands or artists today? -What are some famous orchestra composers that you are aware of?	Informal: Verbal participation in group discussion
5min	List of Mood Words	To remind students of the mood words list we made last class.	-Pass out compiled list of mood words that we came up with during the last lesson -Remind ourselves of the difference between positive	Informal: Verbal participation in group discussion

			and negative moods -Is there anything that you would like to add or subtract from the list I gave you?	
20 min	Listen and React	To use the list of mood words that we made. To listen to songs and identify what mood they are trying to portray.	-Pass out graphic worksheet. -Remind of directions: Listen to 4 different orchestral pieces and write or draw the moods into each of the 4 boxes. Each song gets a separate box. -Listen to snippets of the 4 pieces two times. The first time: listen only. The second time: write or draw as you're listening.	Formal: Worksheet

**Table 2.2 Rehearsal Plan 2**

## **Lesson Plan 3**

Date: January 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021

### **2014 Music National Standard**

**MU:Pr4.3.E.8a** “Demonstrate understanding and application of expressive qualities in a varied repertoire of music through prepared and improvised performances” (NAfME, 2014).

### **Prior Knowledge/Skills**

Students are able to play Dark Visions (Mixon, 2003) at a basic level (correct notes and rhythms). Students understand the concept of dynamics and accents.

### **Rehearsal Objective**

Students will be able to identify the mood of Dark Visions. Students will be able to apply stylistic elements (dynamics, accents, extended techniques) in order to give the piece its mood.

### **Assessment of the Rehearsal**

This rehearsal will be informally assessed. Students should be applying dynamics, accents, and their extended techniques to Dark Visions as they play. If I can hear a difference from the beginning of rehearsal to the end, then it will be a success for the day.

### **Relevant Contextual Factors**

My school has a heavy emphasis on Conscious Discipline (2021) techniques which is all about teaching students to identify their emotions. This is a great lesson for mixing Conscious Discipline and music together in a seamless way. Identifying emotions in music will hopefully help them identify their own emotions.

## Modifications/Accommodations needed

I have one SPED student in this class. He always has a paraprofessional with him. This student will be assessed based on his participation in the ensemble rehearsal and his rhythmic technique.

## Instructional materials, resources, & Technology

Instructional Materials: Dark Visions Score (Mixon, 2003), violin (for modeling purposes if necessary)

Technology: Sound system, metronome

## Rehearsal Plan

<u>Time</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Purpose of Activity</u>	<u>Sequence</u>	<u>Assessment</u>
5 min	Tuning	To identify whether strings of instruments are in tune or not.	-Play pitches of all 5 strings (A, D, G, C, E) for students. -Students will adjust and identify whether their instruments are in tune or not.	Informal: Listening to students while they tune.
3 min	Scales	For students to warm-up on their instruments and begin to think in key signatures.	-D Major Scale and G Major Scale	Informal: Listening
5 min	Creating a Narrative	To create a story that matches the song we are rehearsing	-Read description of piece written in score -Review the mood words associated throughout the song: Menacingly,	Informal: Guided discussion and review of mood words



			Mysterious, and Aggressive -Allow students to create a story that matches those mood words.	
7 min	Chunk through: Beginning-mm. 31 using guided practice and modeling	-To add in the stylistic elements (accents and dynamics)	-Review the mood word of the 1 <sup>st</sup> section of music: Menacingly -How do we make the music match the mood? -Talk through accents and how to add them -Add in dynamics	Informal: Listening  Students evaluated themselves after adding stylistic elements by rating their sound 1-5
7 min	Chunk through: Mm. 31-43 using guided practice	-To add in the stylistic elements (dynamics and extended techniques)	-Review the mood word of middle section: Mysteriously -How do we make the music match the mood? -Talk through the extended techniques and how they add to the mood. -Add in the dynamics	Informal: Listening  Students evaluated themselves after adding stylistic elements by rating their sound 1-5
7 min	Chunk through: Mm. 43-end using guided practice	-To add in the stylistic elements (accents, dynamics, and extended techniques)	-Review the mood word of the final section: Aggressively -How do we make the music match the mood? -We've already done this for the first two sections, so let's	Informal: Listening  Students evaluated themselves after adding stylistic elements by rating their sound 1-5

			do it for the final section! -Add in all stylistic elements	
3 min	Full run through	-To put all the chunks together into one piece of music	-Run through the piece of music to make our story whole.	Informal: Listening  Students evaluated themselves after adding stylistic elements by rating their sound 1-5

**Table 2.3 Rehearsal Plan 3**

## Reflections on Lesson Plans

Overall, I think this series of lessons had its advantages and disadvantages. Each lesson gave me a different outcome among the class I tried this with. I did all these lessons with all my 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade band and orchestra classes. The lesson plans listed above have information that is specific to orchestra. I did the same format for my band classes but tweaked the songs we listened to in the second lesson and which song was rehearsed in the third lesson. In this reflection, I will go through each lesson plan and discuss whether they were individually successful or not.

The first lesson was an intro lesson to the topic of mood and music. Although I have addressed the topic before, I have never addressed it this explicitly before. The goal of this lesson was to get them familiar with mood words and to feel comfortable discussing it as a group. The students learned how to identify whether a mood word was positive or negative and how to identify the mood of a piece of popular music. This was done with two basic instructional strategies, guided discussion and guided listening. After we made our list of moods, we divided the mood words into positive moods and negative moods. Students were assessed by their ability to correctly identify the mood of a piece using a worksheet. They listened to four different popular songs and they were asked to write or draw the mood that they got from that song. I collected these worksheets at the end of the hour and reviewed them to see whether they grasped the concept or not. I think this was a successful intro lesson. I do not think that many adjustments need to be made to this introductory lesson. Eventually an update of the songs used will be needed once these songs are no longer known or popular among middle school aged students. I think this was a great way to introduce my students to identifying moods. Students loved the songs that I used and they seemed to really understand the concept.

The second lesson was almost an exact carbon copy of the first. I made one major change to this lesson and that was to use classical band and orchestra literature instead of popular music. I have found that my students have a hard time bridging the gap between these two styles of music. My goal for this lesson was to help them understand that the two genres are different, but you can still identify the mood within a classical piece of music. I used the same instructional strategies as the first lesson, guided discussion and guided listening. Students were given the exact same worksheet as well as my assessment tool. I do not think this lesson needs much adjustment. The students responded better to the classical literature than I expected. I even had some students that were excited about the music and asked me to give them suggestions of other pieces they could listen to at home. This was a huge win for me because I have had trouble getting students interested in literature in past years.

The third lesson is the lesson that was the biggest challenge for my students. The goal of this lesson was to apply those mood words that we have been learning about to the music that we have been rehearsing. Students had previously learned the stylistic concepts of dynamics and accents. The major instructional strategies I used in this lesson were guided discussion, chunking through the music, and repetition. The first thing we did in this lesson was come up with a story for the piece of music as a group. Students loved the creativity and freedom I allowed for this part of rehearsal. After we came up with the story, I challenged them to play the stylistic elements of the piece so that if a stranger was listening, they might imagine the story in their head.

If I am being totally honest with myself; this lesson was the least successful of the three. I think there were many contributing factors to this. My numbers are down overall in all my classes because most of my students went to virtual learning. This has made playing ensemble

music a bit difficult for my students. They have not felt supported by their sections and are more hesitant to try new things. I think that played a big role, especially in my band classes where there are sometimes only one or two students per section. Another big factor was the gap between the first two lessons and the third one. I had planned to do these consecutively all during one week. Unfortunately, it did not work out like that due a huge COVID outbreak in my school. The first two lessons happened, and then half of my classes got quarantined. Therefore, there was a two-week gap between the first two lessons and the third. I think this also played a major role in how well this lesson was received. By the end of this lesson, students were able to identify the mood of a piece of music that they were playing and knew the very basics of how to add the stylistic elements into the music.

I continued to expand on this lesson series over the next month or so. The lessons were not explicit to the topic of mood and music, but I continued to bring it up and talk about it throughout the next month with whatever we were playing at the time. This whole lesson series gave me a new way to approach how I teach mood in my ensemble classes. What I have been doing the past 3 years has not been working so I wanted to switch it up and teach lessons explicitly on mood and music. This topic just so happens to align with my school's push for Conscious Discipline, so it worked to my advantage in two different ways. I hope to continue using this method while also adjusting the third lesson to make it more successful in the future.

## Chapter 3 - Reflections

Throughout my time at Kansas State, many things have changed in my teaching strategies and my thought processes when planning. Teaching is constantly evolving. We are always trying to find new ways to get concepts across to students and to reach them. Throughout my first 4 years of teaching, I learned a lot about how to do the job and myself as well. When I started my journey at Kansas State, I wanted to find new ways to reach my students. I wanted to be a better teacher so that I could help them be better people. I think my time in this music education program has helped me grow and do exactly that.

I think the class that had the biggest impact on me was History and Philosophy of Music Education. When I re-read the philosophy that I had written during my undergraduate degree, I was a little embarrassed. At that point, I had no real teaching experience and it showed. Now that I have a couple of years under my belt, my teaching philosophy has changed drastically. It has expanded to include things that I would not have even been able to think about during my undergrad years. I have learned that sometimes developing the student as a whole is more important than developing the musician. I want students to be well-rounded adults and be able to function within society. There are a lot of things that I can teach them through music that help develop them as human beings. Since I work at a Title I school, that lesson has become very prevalent and important to me. One other thing that I realized during my first couple years of teaching is that music can help bridge the gap between cultures and I think that is incredibly important to teach students too. Especially in today's society which has become incredibly polarizing, students need something that can bring them together and music can do that.

When I took Rehearsal Techniques, my thought processes on how I approached ensemble classes was changed. Before I took that class, I was focused on getting my students to read notes

and rhythms. When I accepted the job, the students were not able to read music and that has been my main purpose the past couple of years. Sitting in a classroom, even though it was via Zoom, with a group of band directors from around the country was eye opening for me. I got so many different ideas and strategies that I could use to change up my teaching. This year was rough because of the pandemic, and I have been focused on surviving. But I am very excited to get back to some semblance of normal next year so that I can try out some of these rehearsal techniques that I learned last summer. I am looking forward to seeing whether the different things that I learned will help better my students in the long run.

Literature Analysis was another class that was very beneficial to my teaching. When I pick out music, I am more aware of what I am picking. I am able to decide which music is better fit for my students. My score study has been expanded past what I learned in my undergrad degree. This has allowed me to have more focused rehearsals. Instead of having a general plan of what I am going to rehearse during a class period, I have a rehearsal plan that is comprehensive and will cover everything I want to do. This has helped make my ensemble rehearsals more efficient. My students are learning more and learning faster. This class has probably had the most direct impact on my teaching.

Arranging for Bands was also a very insightful class. Although I learned a lot about music theory and arranging during my undergrad degree, I had not done anything as specific as we did during this class. We focused on the three different sections of the band: woodwinds, brass, and percussion. Arranging for each of the specific sections was enlightening. I never knew that there were so many rules to the different sections. When we got to the final project and arranged a song for full band, it was more difficult than I expected. I agonized over the different aspects of my chosen song. Arranging a song for my group of students helped me realize a lot about music

and which music is best suited for my students. I find myself critically assessing music that I am considering purchasing for the different issues that I ran into while arranging myself. I look at home many sections are covering each of the parts. I typically have very few percussionists in my middle school program. I now feel comfortable knowing which parts are truly important and which parts are covered in other areas.

The last class that I found to be very enlightening was Curriculum and Assessment. I have found that this class has made me start to think about the schedule of the year in broader terms. In my first couple years of teaching, I looked at the curriculum as just a guiding document that I thought of in very vague terms. I never realized how comprehensive it could be. While writing my own curriculum last summer, I looked very closely at the curriculum that my district uses. I found that it has many gaps that I need to fill in. Now I plan my lessons around the given curriculum but also expand on the standards. This has changed my usual schedule for the year. I usually start with a loose outline which has been the same the past three years. But last summer, after writing my own curriculum, I modified my loose outline. I wanted to include all of the things I discovered were missing from the curriculum I was given. This past year was the first year I used my new outline and I think it went very well despite the setbacks from the pandemic. I hope to be able to test my new schedule out in a more normal setting next year.

Besides all the knowledge I have gained from my classes, I have also found a number of connections that I did not have before. My first summer was an in-person summer. I met a group of band directors that were also from Missouri. These directors live and work in cities around mine, but I would not have met them had it not been for this degree program at Kansas State. I also have had the privilege to meet educators from around the country. I feel these connections are invaluable and will help me continue to be a better teacher every year when we find each



other at conventions. I am looking forward to finishing up my learning this summer with the last of my classes to finish my degree. This degree program has helped me grow as an educator and I will continue to use the knowledge I have gained for many years.

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