INSIDE: Singing at the Capitol MIOSM Photos

Tips for Teaching Students with Autism
ESSA Highlights

Last week, after years of stalled negotiations and Congressional stalemates, Congress put No Child Left Behind away for good and passed by an overwhelming majority a new version of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

This new bill, titled the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), is an enormous victory for music education advocates. We are truly on the verge of a new day for music education, with opportunities to use federal funding to increase access to music education for all students, especially the most vulnerable.

Among the most important provisions for music education in the bill:

- **A New and Clear Intent to Support Our Nation’s Schools through a Well-Rounded Education:** This is a huge departure from NCLB, which focused heavily on student academic success narrowly defined as reading and math.

- **Enumeration of Music as a Well-Rounded Subject:** Replacing the Core Academic Subject language from NCLB, this language clearly articulates that music should be a part of every child’s education, no matter their personal circumstances.

- **Requirements for Well-Rounded Education:** Schools will now be able to assess their ability to provide a well-rounded education, including music, and address any deficiencies using federal funds.

- **Flexibility of Title I Funds to Support a Well-Rounded Education:** All Title I programs, both schoolwide and targeted, are now available to provide supplemental funds for a well-rounded education, including music.

- **More Professional Development for Music Educators:** Funds from Title I, II, and IV of ESSA may support professional development for music educators as part of supporting a well-rounded education.

- **Flexible Accountability Systems:** States must now include multiple progress measures in assessing school performance, which can include such music-education-friendly measures as student engagement, parent engagement, and school culture/climate.

- **Protection from "Pullouts":** The new ESSA discourages removing students from the classroom, including music and arts, for remedial instruction.

Passing this law with music listed as a stand-alone subject kicks open the door of opportunity to ensuring music’s place in every school — and leading in the decision-making for what that looks like.


Becoming a NAfME member is more important now than ever before. Learn more about membership at [jointoday.nafme.org/takeaction](http://jointoday.nafme.org/takeaction)
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Learn more about ESSA and what it means to you at http://bit.ly/NCLBends

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Front Cover:
Students from Ellen Smith Elementary, Conway, Arkansas.
Christine White, Teacher. Photo Secretary of State Gallery.

Segue Editor Dale Misenhelter

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President’s Note
By Vicki Lind

The school year is drawing to a close and graduation is just around the corner. Although many people believe that teachers have “summers off”, those of us who work in this profession know that much of our summer is spent looking at repertoire, working on curriculum, and attending professional development conferences. Certainly, these endeavors are valuable, but as I begin writing this column I am reminded of the importance of rest and relaxation. Summer presents us with the opportunity to restore our minds and bodies in preparation for the coming year - but to reap the benefits, we must mindfully commit to a real summer vacation.

For many of us, our profession is woven through the life we lead outside of school. We are musicians; we teach, rehearse, and perform on a regular basis both inside and outside of the classroom. Our minds are filled with the responsibilities of teaching. Students surround us with questions and concerns, administrators bring new requests and requirements to our door, and our email inbox seems to be relentlessly full. Even when we are away from school, we are mindfully honing our craft, writing responses to email in our heads, or analyzing one of the pieces our students are working on. Summers present a different workload, but we are still musicians engaged in our community and we often spend our time planning for the next school year. Music teachers’ brains are simply busy much of the time.

My wish for you this summer is that you plan for and take a real break. Find time to step away from email, turn off the cell phone, and leave the responsibilities of being a teacher/musician behind. In a 2013 article in Scientific America, the author, Ferris Jabr, outlined Americans’ need for mental downtime. He pointed out that, as a nation we are among the busiest people in the world, and he stressed that mental breaks can actually increase productivity and replenish attention. Tim Kreider echoed Jabr’s ideas in his New York Times article, The Busy Trap. In this article, Kreider stated, “Idleness is not just a vacation, an indulgence or a vice; it is as indispensable to the brain as vitamin D is to the body, and deprived of it we suffer a mental affliction as disfiguring as rickets.”

Vacation is also seen as a key to creativity. In a 2014 Forbes article, Bryan Mattimore, author of Idea Stormers: How to Lead and Inspire Creative Breakthroughs is quoted as saying, “Vacation is one of the few times, especially if someone has a full-time job, to be able to think deeply about a subject and create something new…Because many things are new on a vacation, it encourages people to transcend their usual thinking (they notice the newness around them) which can be great fodder for new ideas.”

Vacation time isn’t just about restoring the mind but also has physical ramifications. In an op-ed piece in the New York Times, Tony Swartz, the chief executive officer of The Energy Project, stated that, “the importance of restoration is rooted in our physiology.” Research suggests vacations can relieve stress, help prevent heart disease and other illnesses, and fights depression. And, while we might have images of exotic locations or lengthy stays at a luxury resort, the research indicates that locale and length of stay are not as important as just getting away. Arkansas is a wonderful place to plan what has become known as the “stay-cation”, vacationing close to home. Whether your idea of a vacation is enjoying the beauty of nature or delving into city life – there is something for everyone in our great state.

The challenge for those of us who lead busy lives is to actively pursue leisure time. It is far too easy to fill our days with the busy tasks of being a parent, teacher, and community member, but it is important for all of us to find some time for a break. As Kreider stated in the article cited earlier, “The space and quiet that idleness provides is a necessary condition for standing back from life and seeing it whole, for making unexpected connections and waiting for the wild summer lightning strikes of inspiration — it is, paradoxically, necessary to getting any work done.”


Segue: May 2016

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Touching the Lives of 20 Million Children

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Makes better musicians.
It happened again, one of those “that’s no longer relevant” moments in a class. We were doing our childrens literature unit in the elementary methods course and I made a reference to a beautiful and widely known book (Hush, by Mingfong Ho, about growing up in Thailand, which won a Caldecott Award for illustrations by Holly Meade) being visible on the shelf in the film “You’ve Got Mail” … you know, where Meg Ryan loses her bookshop in New York City after Tom Hanks opens the big box book retailer around the corner. That’s about all I said to the class, perhaps not expecting them to be terribly impressed, but to at least recognize the reference. Nope. One older fellow (who had taught, coincidentally, in Thailand) knew the film – but not even a blink of recognition (or interest, inasmuch as I could tell) from the rest, all “traditional” college age kids in a required course. I think one can safely assume further references to its origins in the 1940 film with Jimmy Stewart would have been lost on them as well.

A similar occurrence the day before was still stinging a little. In our romp through some folk music awareness in the Introductory course, I’d set up a recording of Pete Seeger and his infamous “Big Muddy” incident, describing how CBS had refused to broadcast his performance as it was critical of the war and a president. One student had raised her hand sheepishly when I asked if anybody knew who Pete Seeger was (she said her parents had been listeners, stopping just short of a full eye roll), and further questions about musical connections to the turbulent times of the 60’s are almost too embarrassing to talk about. Suffice to say the more questions I posed about their thoughts on the power and social acceptability of artistic opinion, who decides what music is or was permitted on broadcast TV, war protests on campuses, etc., the blanker the stares. There may have been a flicker of interest when I described how at many colleges all males had been required to participate in ROTC. I can report that all were willing to listen to the tune, and a few toes were tapped.

Perhaps I over-worry the implications of social and generational divergence. I don’t think it’s just an idealizing the past endeavor, although I do like to make a lot of connections to popular culture, films, scores, etc., many of them reasonably recent, and admit to being astounded with kids today in universities having so little awareness of what seems an important shared cultural history. It also seems useful to provoke them with the sometimes contrasting, sometimes shared experiences of other cultures, but with so little in common to compare things to, the whole exercise seems in danger of collapse.

Are Broadway or show tunes fair game for recognition, or are they, too, no longer relevant? String quartet themes by Haydn, the motives of well known classical standards? Indeed, how does one “connect” in the Core Arts Standards with so little upon which to connect?

In a more serious vein, the cultural critic E.D. Hirsch has long argued for a shared, common body of educational knowledge and cultural awareness – the better to recognize a deeper context of meaning among the recognizable symbols and shared threads of a society. It is, in effect, some of the earliest argument and rationale leading to the Common Core.

As the clock ticks and educational bureaucrats invent new ways to test and invariably conjure up images of “improvement” from generation to generation (called the Flynn effect, where each decade arguably evidences a 3 point increase in IQ – some 30 points or so over the last 100 years), maybe there’s more to it than recognition of popular culture totems, or just being able to place the US Civil War in the right century, something many college students are actually embarrassed to try to do when asked (ask me how I know).

Implications of the “that’s just not relevant” also caught me - more consequentially - recently in a class discussion on the value of standards and curriculum. Nurturing real discussion can be treacherous, and allowing kids a little room to stake out possible positions and arguments, then trying to bring it back together is fraught with the danger of opinions run amuck. Curriculum as a necessary professional awareness and educational reality temporarily fell that day to critical mass and popular opinion that fund raising, programs, and trips are the reality they’d all experienced, and who was I to try to tell them differently?

Yes, culture evolves … it’s a complexity of awareness and values, and among the lessons learned is that life is not reductively binary (either this or that). In that mode we find ourselves in an educational climate that glorifies technology, accepts quickly googled answers, and shrugs its shoulders at the widely recognized and valued cultural concepts of the previous generations, and that is an education that only holds people back.

To be fair, these kids know Orff instruments, and can really use solfege - neither of which I had a useful, real working knowledge of when I was their age. They’ve improvised on recorders, explored movement activities at length, and danced folk dances – all experiences missing from my own undergraduate training. Maybe relevance is in the eye of the beholder.
ArkMEA Capitol Concerts
Bart Dooley  MIOSM Chair

The 19th Annual Capitol Concerts were held March 16th and 17th in the rotunda of the Arkansas State Capitol. Close to 1000 students from 13 schools joined their voices in singing the music of the 2016 Concert for Music In Our Schools Month. This year’s musical selections included pieces in French, Latin, Spanish, and English and spanned many genres.

Kirby High School Advanced Guitar Ensemble from Mineral Springs, kicked off Wednesday’s celebration by playing two selections with their director Bill Hathcote. Taylor Elementary and Gandy Elementary Singers from White Hall performed “Joyful, Joyful” under their director Ann Tibbs. Beryl Henry Elementary Choir from Hope performed “Kind-Hearted Hand” with their director Sandra Jones. Nashville Elementary Scrapper Singers performed “A World of Difference” under director Jaree Hall. Ida Burns Elementary from Hope accompanied on piano by their director, Bart Dooley and directed by UCA intern, Tyler Wilson.

Joining these students for Wednesday’s mass choir selections were Camden Fairview Intermediate Honor Choir directed by Chelsea Ross, Kirby Elementary 4th, 5th and 6th Grade Choir directed by Bill Hathcote and Lingle Middle School from Rogers directed by Glenda McArdle.

Ruth Doyle Middle School from Conway started Thursday’s concert with “Jubilate Deo” and later performed “Radioactive” under their director Patty Oeste. Peake Elementary – New Edition Choir from Arkadelphia performed “A Disney Silly Sing-a-long with their director Laura Cornelius. Jonesboro Visual and Performing Arts Magnet Chellos performed “The Can Can”. Jonsboro VPA Chorale performed “Superhero” and the Strings and Chorale performed together on the song “Your Friend Shall Be the Tall Wing”. The director at Jonesboro VPA is Mary Jackson. Southside Elementary from Batesville performed “In This World” with director Dawn Harris. Ellen Smith Elementary Chorus from Conway with their director Christina Altes, joined the group for the mass choir selections.

Our special guest performers for the Wednesday’s concert was the entertaining Dr. Steven Lance and his son Harry Lance from Conway. Steven is a writing professor at UCA whose hobby is playing lap dulcimer with his two kids. Harry is a sixth grade student at Ruth Doyle Middle School in Conway who plays the violin, hammered dulcimer and piano. They along with daughter/ sister Rachel perform and speak regularly around the region folk music. Thursday’s special guest was the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra conductor Phillip Mann. His entertaining speech was very encouraging and challenging to the crowd. Also speaking was UALR’s Dr. Vicki Lind, ArkMEA President on advocacy for music education.

The concerts this year was such a success and lots of musical memories were made in many young lives! We would love to welcome new schools join us for MIOSM 2017!
Teaching Students with Autism

Nancy Summit
Guest Article

Tips for Teaching Students with Autism

Music classrooms have long been a welcoming haven for students with exceptionalities. While students with autism present unique challenges for the music teacher, there has been much research conducted on autism, both in the field of general education and music education. While “one size does not fit all,” these possible solutions may serve as models that can be adapted for students with autism.

Information about Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD)

All teachers who have the privilege of interacting with students who are on the spectrum should make sure that they are informed as to what autism is and how the symptoms impact the students and educational environment. Autism results from a neurological disorder that disrupts normal brain functions and is a complex developmental disability. Symptoms include communication delays, repeating words/phrases, not reacting to verbal cues, problems with social interactions, unusual sensitivity to sensory stimulation, inability to deal with change, not making direct eye contact, peculiar repetitive play, and self-stimulation. Currently, 1 out of 150 students in the U.S. has autism and the rates are increasing by 10-17% each year. One of the first things any music teacher should do is to confer with the parents, teachers, and special education professionals of students with autism. Parents and teachers of children on the spectrum will be able to inform music educators as to which learning modality the students typically use, what kind of routine they need, if they have sensitivities, and their current cognitive level.

Instruction and Students with Autism

Students with autism go through an extra layer of decoding when interpreting instruction, which means that they will seem to not understand something as quickly as the other students. Knowing this may enable teachers to be persistent in instructing their students with autism instead of giving up on their ability to achieve. Preparing students for what will be done in classrooms may help students grasp information more quickly – for autistic students, a one-on-one discussion is best. For example, if you are covering a new piece of music, let your students on the spectrum preview it the day before.

As a method of instructing students with autism, the TEACCH program focuses on organized teaching used to expand the independence of children on the spectrum. TEACCH is comprised of four elements: organizing the space for maximum effectiveness, schedules outlining tasks, work systems that show specific expectations for the student at work, and a task organization that clearly states the learning task (Ryan, et al., 2011). For example, if the task is correctly assembling an instrument, the classroom should be consistently set up in such a way that it is easy to get out and assemble the instrument, the student should have a list of instructions for assembly, and there could possibly be pictures showing the correct procedures. Students should be positively rewarded for accomplishing their tasks. Eventually, the student will not need the structure and support.

Students with autism frequently display an affinity for technology. Personal digital assistants (or other devices such as smart phones or iPads) can be used to load a video of a task being performed, pictures of tasks to be performed, audio prompts, or simply to organize schedules (Mechling, Gast, & Seid, 2009). PDAs have been used by students on the spectrum to learn a variety of tasks, such as purchasing, food preparation, and dish washing. Students with autism could use a PDA to familiarize themselves with the schedule of a marching contest, for example, or to remind themselves of the correct sequence for putting a reed on a clarinet.

Inability to communicate is not the same thing as inability to understand

Communication and Students with Autism

One characteristic that impacts autistic students is their introversion. The classroom difficulties that children with autism face often result in students retreating into their inner lives, or their “comfort zone”. While severe disturbance in communication is one of autism’s symptoms, inability to communicate is not the same thing as inability to understand (Guldberg, 2010). Teachers
assume that students will be able to verbally express requests or confusion, but verbal communication is sometimes difficult for students with autism. A strategy used to facilitate communication with students on the spectrum is the Picture Exchange Communication System. PECS allows teachers to make pictures with words so that students with autism can communicate non-verbally. In most districts or schools, a special education professional has access to the software (Hourigan & Hourigan, 2009). PECS can be used to visually cue schedules for autistic students, allow them to ask for items (musical instruments, etc.), and express pain or discomfort.

Teachers may need to consider communicating more efficiently during lessons. Choosing specifically what to say and using the least amount of language will help all students, including students on the spectrum. Students with autism may need a little more time to process and respond, so teachers should give them time to think. The use of more non-verbal gestures develops an autistic child’s ability to make eye contact, since they will have to look at the teacher for instructions. Instead of verbally instructing a student to breathe more deeply before singing, the music teacher could use a non-verbal gesture as a reminder.

Social interactions are usually difficult for students on the spectrum, who might show inappropriate emotions, have problems sharing their feelings, and struggle with understanding others’ perspectives. Another reason for the lack of social skills may be that children with autism are paying attention to the wrong details and are interpreting social situations incorrectly (Kokina & Kern, 2010). Students on the spectrum will need specific, point blank instruction in how to interact appropriately with other people. Musical call and response songs are one way to assess this social participation. Games and songs that involve taking turns or one on one interaction are also helpful.

**Behavior and Students with Autism**

Disruptive classroom behavior by students with autism is caused by their difficulty in dealing with normal classroom expectations, such as sitting still for long periods, completing work on their own, or taking turns with other students. Disruptive behavior may be prompted by loud noises, pain, illness, discomfort, desire for attention, or environmental conditions. It may be useful to have a one-on-one conversation with your students on the spectrum about appropriate classroom behavior and provide a written description (or pictorial representation) of behavior expectations. Students should be given a chance to practice those routines and rules when the rest of the class is not there. Positive reinforcement and positive instructions is sound practice for any student. Reward systems have been shown to be effective; more than likely, the student’s classroom teacher may already have a system in place. Music teachers should discuss any disruptive behavior with the student’s classroom teachers as soon as possible after it happens, because the student’s team may know of strategies that have been proven to work.

While plentiful, short activities work well for most students, students with autism need to be able to anticipate changes in activities. Preparing students for transitions between activities can include signaling a transition with recorded music or verbal cues. Telling students what will happen during the lesson, writing and displaying the lesson plan so the students can see, and using PECS icons to map out the lesson are all ways to help children with autism anticipate transitions.

Another issue that may trigger disruptive behavior is the classroom environment itself. Children on the spectrum are often over sensitive to sensory stimulation such as light and sound, since they may have Sensory Processing Disorder, which often affects children on the spectrum. The sensory system of a child with SPD does not convert information from the outside world correctly; simple motor skills present a challenge, and sensory input may be either sought or avoided. Examples of seeking or creating sensory input include hand flapping, spinning in circles, or making noises. A child avoiding sensory input will be unusually sensitive to ordinary sensory information – textures, noises, etc. – and retreat to the comfort zone. This may result in delayed response to cues, attention difficulties, refusal to participate, problems with movement activities, and difficulty understanding and remembering what is being taught. Students with SPD require time to become accustomed to their environment. Gradual introductions to the environment can be helpful; teachers can try letting students take their time entering the room from the hallway, as long as they are accompanied by an aide. Teachers may also need to turn down music volume, decelerate the lesson pace, let the student take a break with the aide, and increase repetitions.
Noise-reducing headphones might be useful for a loud environment like a music class. A symptom of autism that can disrupt a classroom is echolalia, or repeating a phrase over and over. Echolalia is a form of self-stimulation, and it is triggered by various factors. Echolalia is a sign that the student is retreating into their comfort zone; sometimes a teacher can re-engage the student into the classroom by beginning the conversation with the topic of the phrase they are repeating, and then moving the dialogue into what is happening in the classroom.

Social stories are a more recently developed technique in which a short story outlines a specific social situation, such as taking turns during a game or how to act in an unfamiliar context (Kokina & Kern, 2010; Okada, Ohtake, & Yanagihara, 2010). Social stories are a means of practicing correct behavior for a setting or event beforehand and should describe positive results for the correct behavior; music teachers may wish to design social stories for correct concert behavior, musical trips, or the transition from a middle school to a junior high ensemble. The social stories should clearly describe the behavior that is incorrect, describe the desired behavior, come from the student’s point of view, use visuals, and use positive expressions. SmartBoards (or smart phones and iPads) can be vehicles for Social Stories. Once a target behavior has been identified and an appropriate Social Story has been developed, the story can be put into a PowerPoint format. Students love seeing their pictures on the big screen; teachers can take pictures of ASD students doing what they are supposed to do and insert those pictures into the PowerPoint presentation. For example, if an autistic student has a tendency to play their instrument while the teacher is giving instructions, the teacher could take a picture of the student sitting still and not playing, write a short 5-10 sentence story about it, and then the student could help the teacher design the Social Story in PowerPoint. This might take some time outside of class, but will enable the student to participate more efficiently during rehearsal.

**Conclusion**

All students have the right to a well-rounded music education. As music teachers, it is our responsibility to see that we are informed as to the best methods of imparting that instruction to students. The research cited above has enabled me to better understand autistic spectrum disorders. In many cases, general suggestions for students with autism can be modified to suit individual students in the music classroom. The increasing solutions that currently exist can be modified and adapted for the music classroom to make it a welcoming and educational environment for every student.

**References**


Nancy Summit is a Ph.D. student in music education at the University of Memphis.
Portable Devices: Mindfulness Questions

I recently purchased a cat toy. On the packaging were warnings - instructions of how to supervise my cat so that he/she wouldn’t be harmed.

If a cat is important enough to merit safety precautions (!) I believe that our kids merit precautions for their devices as well. During the past ten years I have witnessed the proliferation of smart phones and texting in school settings, and it is my observation and opinion that the improper use of these devices leads to unintended negative side effects. They are not harmless. The purpose of this article is to help parents and students develop digital mindfulness.

I am not alone in my observations. Sherry Turkle, a technology scholar from MIT, in her book Making Room For Conversation: The Art of Talk in the Digital Age has documented these negative changes in a scientific manner. I recommend the book for all parents and teachers.

Here is a short list of why I believe these devices should come with warning labels. For the details consult Turkle’s book.

1) Improper use reduces “situational awareness” and concentration skill.
2) Improper use reduces “communication skills”.
3) Improper use reduces “creativity”.
4) Portable devices leave kids vulnerable to cyber-bullying and cyber-stalking.
5) Portable devices can be addicting.

Times are changing, and we live in a whole new world of technology, but I believe that in our society it is time to consider the downside of improper use. I have heard comparisons of today’s devices to automobiles in the 1950’s before seatbelts and airbags were developed, or to cigarettes before their health effects were well established.

What is the proper use? This is for you to decide, but I have found that this mindfulness questionnaire has had a positive influence with my students in helping them decide what is in their best interest. We take a full class period at the beginning of the semester to go through the questions as a class. Take your time and carefully consider the following:

A Cell Phone Reflection Sheet

1. When conversing with a friend(s) did you ever want someone’s attention but they were distracted by a cell phone call?
2. Do you get anxious or depressed if you don’t have a cell phone with you?
3. Do you consider your phone a friend, or security blanket?
4. Do you bring a cell phone to school because it benefits you in some way, or because everyone does it?
5. Have you ever been hassled for not returning a text?
6. How long could you go without your phone? Have you ever gone a day or days without your phone? What emotions do you feel by not being connected?
7. What is the monthly cost of your phone service? The cost of your phone?
8. Studies suggest that cell phone use reduces empathy, concentration, attention span, conversation skill, and creativity. How might it be affecting your learning?
9. Would you consider yourself hooked or addicted to your device?
10. Who benefits financially from your cell phone? Do you?
11. How much time and energy revolves around your carrying, charging, paying for, and using your phone?
12. How comfortable are you with solitude - the ability to sit and wait for creative thoughts?
13. In order to let your thoughts sink in, could you go for 10 minutes before and after class without connecting to your phone?
14. How would you rate your ability to focus on one task for extended time?
15. Are you the master, or servant of your smart phone?
16. Have you heard of skill fade? What skills may you be losing due to cell phone/texting?
17. Is there advertising on your smart phone? Have you ever used it to order a product?
18. How many minutes are there in a school day? And how many minutes do you spend thinking about or using your phone?
19. Does anticipating a call or text affect your “situational awareness” during class?
20. Do you have any special quiet times during the day, without technology?
21. Have you ever taken your phone to bed with you? How has it affected your sleep and alertness the next day?
22. When talking with friends, how often do you talk about ideas/learning, verses time talking about what is on the phone?
23. Is “newer” always the same thing as “better”?
24. In public, which looks better: head-down, oblivious to people and the world around you, or head-up, full of life, and interacting with the people and world around you?
25. What changes could you make in your day in order to use your phone more mindfully?

Steve Eckels teaches guitar in the Kalispell School District in Montana. Reprint by permission.
More Than Just Prep Time

Zoltan Kodaly said “Real art is one of the most powerful forces in the rise of mankind, and he who renders it accessible to as many people as possible is a benefactor of humanity.” Luciano Pavarotti once said “If children are not introduced to music at an early age, I believe something fundamental is actually being taken from them.” Carl Orff said “to experience, then intellectualize.” These quotes from music greats show how important music, as well as the other arts are to the complete education of a child.

With the passing of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) this past Fall, music has been given the same importance and weight as other core subjects. Hooray! But even though Congress has passed this, it may take more convincing from our colleagues who are not music educators. Music is more than just “prep time” for the grade level teacher. Music is a way to allow students to learn and grow in ways to help them be productive people of society. It also brings joy and excitement to students and those around them. The music classroom may be the only place where a student may feel safe and successful.

Kodaly’s quote is one I take to heart and consider as part of my mission as a music educator. Many of my students have hard very little. if any, music training prior to coming to kindergarten. I love to watch them, as they “get it!” Before winter break, it made my heart happy when I heard the students sing the songs they learned for their program to anyone who would listen, whether it was the lunch ladies, the art teacher, or the residents at the nursing home across the street. Sharing what they learned is a gift that will continue giving.

Can you imagine learning your ABC’s without singing the song? What about the days of the week? The fifty states? Math facts, or rules of grammar? Pavarotti and Orff were spot on with the thoughts. Music not only brings us joy and happiness, but it helps us to learn and to process.

One of the favorite things I like to share with classroom teachers is the connections students make with music and something learned in their grade level classrooms. Cross curricular connections allow students to link prior knowledge in music to what they are currently learning in the classroom, as chances of students remembering what they’ve learned increases because more areas of the brain may be engaged. Processing what is being learned, through talking, reading, writing, or musical performance, is critical to keeping that knowledge. I give an award to any of my classes that make a cross curricular connection during their time in my music room. This award is then proudly posted on their classroom door for all to see.

I am very fortunate to be in a district and a building where music is highly valued. I understand this is not the case everywhere. Don’t let that stop you, and don’t be afraid to invite the grade level teachers to come a few minutes early before they get their students so they can see what their students are doing in music. Tell your students to play the music game or sing the song they just learned at recess or any other time when students gather together.

Ask your colleagues about their involvement in music during their school years and make a poster to share with students and teachers. Ask for your own table at Open House, Math Night, or Reading Night type school events so you can share information and activities about music with your students’ parents. What do you do to advocate for music in your classroom?

Carmen Campbell is the Elementary/General Music Chair for the Nebraska Music Educators Association, and teaches K-6 at Benson West Elementary in Omaha. Reprint by permission.

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Vocation or Avocation?

Three scenarios from one week of an elementary school music teacher

1st Scenario
My third graders were finishing up music class, putting away recorders and Orff instruments, and getting ready to go back to their classroom. They were chatting with each other as they did so when one of the boys, Mitchell (names have been changed), turned to me and asked, “Mrs. Gregory, what made you want to become a music teacher?”

Several thoughts flashed through my mind in the seconds before I answered his question. The first thought was that the young man must have enjoyed the learning activities and processes so much on that day that he was inspired to be a music teacher and wanted to know about it. My second thought was just the opposite – perhaps Mitchell didn’t like what we did that day and he was thinking how on earth I could have possibly been hired as an elementary music teacher. Judging from the happy expression on his face, I assumed the former most likely.

Then my next thought was just how do I answer that? There was no one specific music teacher in my life that I had that I wanted to emulate. There was no moment in my schooling where someone turned to me and said that I was really good at music and ought to pursue it as a career.

For me, it was the music itself. I just wanted to be surrounded by music all the time, so much so that I even remember the piece that inspired me with the idea of making music a career. I was about 13 when I heard “Overture” from Tommy, the rock opera by The Who. I had a 45-rpm that I played over and over. I didn’t know what the opera itself was about – but that overture! It sounded like rock music, but it had French horns! It was from an opera, but it had guitars and drums and a really good beat. I was hooked!

So back to the scenario. My answer to Mitchell was that it was music itself that made me want to be a music teacher. He thoughtfully nodded his head, as if he understood the feeling exactly.

2nd Scenario
This week was the time of year when students had to sign up for the classes they would be taking in middle school. The middle school choir and band teachers had sent “recruitment” videos and asked that I show them to all the fifth-graders to encourage them to sign up for one of their music classes. After showing the videos, I asked the students if they had any questions. Students’ inquiries were typical. “How often does it meet?” “Do we have to wear a uniform?” “Can we take band and choir?”

And then one young lady, Penny, asked that question: “Why do we have to take music? How is it going to help us in our lives?” Usually I respond with something about how studying music can make for well-rounded individuals. Or I tell them that studies have shown that students who take music classes have higher grades and better test scores. Or, learning a variety of subjects helps you to make educated choices about what you would like to do in life.

But this time I answered differently. I responded to her with a question: “Have you ever heard of Albert Einstein?” Penny looked a little puzzled at that response. Others in the class began calling out facts that they knew about Einstein. He was a scientist. He had crazy hair. He discovered the equation E=mc2. He was Jewish. He didn’t like school. By this time I’m sure everyone in the class was becoming totally confused about the connection between why one should learn music and Albert Einstein. Then someone said, “Einstein played the violin.”

That’s when I explained that Einstein’s job – his vocation - was that of a scientist. But his hobby – his avocation – was playing the violin. Often when Einstein was stuck coming up with a solution to one of his scientific problems, he would play the violin, and the answer would come to him. I told the class that you never could tell when knowing something about music may help you in whatever you decide to do in life.

Later in the day I saw Penny in the hallway and told her I wondered why she had asked me the question about students having to take music. Usually it’s the student who doesn’t like music who wants to know why they have to take the class. I had always thought that Penny liked music – she’s a member of the honor choir, and often sings solos. I asked her “What do you want to do when you are grown up?” She said, quite cheerfully, “I want to be a singer.”
3rd Scenario

In one of my second-grade classes there is a boy, Duane, who always chews on his shirt, hums a lot, talks out, and when the class plays instruments he always plays ahead or behind, or does his own thing. Seems like he refuses to cooperate and work with the group. Very frustrating. But this week an insightful incident will forever change the way I view his participation in music class.

I had notation to a new song on the board, and as usual, Duane starting singing the words before the class was even given the starting pitch. This time, however, I noticed that he seemed to be singing the melody correctly, and on the right pitch. I asked him to stay after class so that I could check something.

After class, I instructed Duane to stay seated where he could not see the keyboard, and I told him that I was going to play a note on the piano and see if he could identify it. He said, “Oh, my dad says I’m good at this.” I played a key, and he said “That’s an F.” (correct) I played another key. “That’s a C. (correct) Another key, different range. “That’s A.” (correct) Another key. “G.” (correct). I played a black key. Duane said, “I’m not so good with sharps and flats.” “But you knew I played a black key?”

“Yes.”

All this time I had been thinking that Duane was being uncooperative, when in reality; his brain was probably analyzing all the sounds in the room! In the book Musicophilia, Oliver Sacks titled the chapter about absolute pitch, “Papa Blows His Nose in G.” Perhaps Duane hears every sound and attaches a pitch to it. I can only imagine how frustrating that must be for him.

*****

Vocation? Will Mitchell decide to become a music teacher? Will Penny become a professional singer? Will Duane make use of his special gift and pursue some type of career in music?

Or avocation? Maybe Mitchell will simply continue to appreciate the experiences he has had in music class and grow to be a supporter and patron of the arts. Maybe Penny will have some other career, but share her love of singing with others. Maybe Duane will become the next great scientific mind, researching how the brain functions and amazing his friends with his perfect pitch.

My job as their music teacher is to continue to give them the best musical experiences possible. Maybe they will grow up to be professional musicians. At the very least, with positive experiences in elementary school music class, they will grow in their understanding and appreciation of music and be more likely to participate as an adult, and therefore continue to support music and music education.

Resources:


Amy Gregory teaches in the Parkway School District in the St.Louis, MO. area. Reprint by permission.
# Financial Report

Jaree Hall, Treasurer and State Executive

Arkansas Music Educators Association
Custom Summary Report
January 1, 2015 through January 4, 2016

## Ordinary Income/Expense

### Income

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
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**Total Income**: 31,251.57

### Expense

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<td>In-Service Expense</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mileage</td>
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<td>Reconciliation Discrepancies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Segue Expense</td>
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**Technology**

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**Total Technology**: 238.92

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**Total Travel & Ent**: 906.01

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**Total Expense**: 19,400.19

### Net Ordinary Income

**Net Ordinary Income**: 11,851.38

### Other Income/Expense

#### Other Income

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<tbody>
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**Total Other Income**: 5.00

### Net Other Income

**Net Other Income**: 5.00

**Net Income**: 11,856.38

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