

Philosophy of Education and how it affects my teaching

In a handwritten letter received from a former student, Dr. KC, in remembering her band experience, wrote, *"It is more than just about music."* She considered the life-skills she learned in band (time management, team building, respect for authority, commitment, self-discipline....) to have been major factors in her success in college, medical school and life.

In a Facebook message from a Music Ed major (now a band director): *"I just wanted to take a moment to thank you again and again for steering me in the right path, MUSIC! You are one of the greater influences in my life... If it was not for you acquiring the scholarship for me to take lessons ... then I would not be in the position I am in now. I would not be the player I am today nor would I have had all of the musical experiences and opportunities that I do have. YOU did that for me, YOU! How do you properly thank someone who changed the course of your life? I can't....there is no way I will ever be able to give you the thanks that you really deserve, for the potential you saw in me, for the care you gave me, for the trust you put in me, and for the time and energy you invested in me! That is absolutely amazing and something I will NEVER forget. I hope you realize how special, unique, and loved you are by so many. ...you changed a life...MINE. You will always have a very special place in my heart for what you've done."*

In a blog comment to a post I called, "I Want To Trust You": *I'm remembering a little white lie that Tina and I told you just to get out of class for a minute or two.....Unfortunately, you found out about it. I've never felt so guilty as when I was caught tricking YOU! You were the TEACHER to go to when things weren't going ok. And a trusted teacher.....I was SO sorry!"*

Four days before Christmas, I received a text message from a then senior: *"G, I just got kicked out of my house. Please help me!"*

In a hand-written note dated the day after high school graduation: *"Out of every teacher I had, you were no doubt my biggest supporter..... I appreciate that you believed in my potential, even in my early years of high school when I experienced self-diagnosed "failures". The occasional messages of encouragement assured me that my efforts did not go unnoticed like I had assumed. I hope that when I have students of my own my teaching style models yours, because I have experienced first-hand the positive results it yields."*

And from another hand-written note: *"You extended to me and others a kindness that most adults don't extend to people my age. You were/are a teacher who tells me I can get through it. Every student has the one teacher they will never forget throughout their entire lives and you're that teacher for me."*

Responding to a Facebook post (early morning on her wedding day), a former student wrote: *"You were the biggest influence on my life! Hands down, the best teacher there has ever been!"*

I share these correspondences to make several points. I utilize a variety of technologies in communicating, informing, teaching and mentoring. I have earned my students' trust and they are comfortable coming to me in times of crisis outside the subject I teach. I am making a LASTING IMPACT on these students' lives! I don't just teach music, but use music education to change people's lives for the better.

As a band director, I aim to provide a safe, encouraging environment where students can discover and experience the mechanical fundamentals of music theory and performance. I want them to understand a composer's intentions and add their personal interpretation and emotion into turning written music into audio (sometimes visual) art. I expect them to always strive for a higher level of excellence. For me, however, teaching is about more than "just" the academics and artistic value of music. Students are so much more than containers into which we are supposed to dump vast amounts of knowledge. I want to help students realize a love and appreciation for the art of music that they can use as a performer or audience member for the rest of their lives. I want to earn their admiration and respect so that they will trust that I provide more than just knowledge. I want them to see me not only as a proficient musician, but as a mentor who cares about them individually. I want to maintain the level of control necessary in a music ensemble while also encouraging emotional and artistic expression and contribution. I want them to learn from what I show them, from each other, from music competitions, and from the mistakes they make along the way. I want them to desire and strive for excellence in music and in everything they do. I want them to appreciate their community and to give back to the many people in this town who support them.

Music Literacy across the Curriculum

Music is Literacy. Language has its grammar and syntax, chemistry its symbols, physics its formulas, mathematics its equations; music also has its language of symbols and niche Italian terms. Music notation is a language composers use to transcribe musical thought to paper enabling readers who know the language to read, interpret and translate that language into aural art. Students learn to read this specialized notation language in the same way a mathematician learns formulas or the chemist applies the element symbols. In a piece called, “Andante” students learned the title is an Italian term indicating tempo, or speed: faster than Adagio but slower than Allegro. Many of the musical terms are, historically predominantly Italian. Musicians must understand that fortissimo is louder than forte, which means they also learn the suffix ‘issimo’. Allegretto is a “little bit” allegro. Dolce is nearly the opposite of marcato and if you get crescendo and decrescendo backwards, you can ruin the entire effect. If the music page tells you to rallentando and you accelerando instead, you crash. If you miss a fermata or play through a caesura, you’ll be embarrassed. Not only are there vocab words, but there are abbreviations for them as well; f, ff, <, >, ^, //. **Foreign language.**

The study of music is interdisciplinary. Students studying music are also learning other subjects, like history, cinema studies, theater and foreign language.

We performed music from the movie, “The King’s Speech”, which included music by Beethoven (historic, iconic, classical), and learned some of the HISTORY of the movie, i.e. WWII, the king’s stuttering problem and the artistic effect of the music behind the speech [only in the movie] as we watched that particular movie clip. That’s **history** and **theater**.

Music is **cultural**. A piece called “Africa; Ceremony, Song and Ritual...” showcases 26 different drumming assignments and includes singing traditional African melodies and vocalizing tribal African sounds. We reviewed pictures of African drums, watched/listened to video/sound clips and took class time to understand how that complex sound is really not much more than several more simple rhythms layered on top of each other, often in compound meters of simultaneous duple and triple rhythms (did you get that?). If we were to correctly perform “Andante” and “Africa” in the same concert, not a single audience participant should have trouble determining which piece is European and which is African.

To play/understand Jazz music necessitates some **social studies** understanding of New Orleans and how the import of slave music morphed into a style of music that the whole world understands originated in the USA. There is an academically valid reason why much of jazz, especially originally, was not written down. **History again.**

Music is **mathematical**. “*Music is the arithmetic of sounds as optics is the geometry of light.*” *Composer Claude Debussy, c. 1900.* When we read those markings, in addition to telling us what sound to make, they also tell us how to group them together rhythmically. It takes two sixteenths to make an eighth, two eighths to make a quarter, two quarters to make a half and two half notes to equal a whole. **Math.**

Music is **emotional**. Performed well, “Stars and Stripes” will evoke a significantly different response from “Taps”, or the jazz version of “Sing, Sing, Sing”. Music is used at birthdays and at funerals; to represent victory or emote defeat. It can make us cheer or cry.but **ONLY** if the musicians understand and convey the emotion in what/how they play. **Psychology/Theatre!**

To talk **drama or choreography**, we could discuss Marching Band or Show Choir.

When we tune our instruments - because we know that out of tune notes together make an ugly sound – we apply a basic understanding of sound waves and frequency. We lengthen or shorten the instruments to alter pitch. Understanding vibrations, frequencies and how the length of the instrument adjusts pitch is **physics**.

Using Evaluation to Improve Instruction

Dr. John Scheib, a Ball State University professor, introduced his graduate level Assessment Techniques class with the question, “How do I know that you know?” The purpose of evaluation is to determine and measure student learning. I use that feedback to adjust my teaching to improve

student learning. With band, most evaluation is aural, although there can be written assignments. Rehearsals are an ongoing evaluation that involves instant constructive feedback to the group. I evaluate individual performance – calling on band members to play a particular passage, or working with them in small groups – and provide personalized instruction.

Relationships

Faculty members. I collaborate with other faculty members. I have provided uniforms, instruments and recordings for students to use in presentations for other classes. I have asked other teachers who are instrumentalists to work with individual students. I have provided props for theater productions, and have helped students transpose and learn their music for the school musical. I have worked out schedules with other teachers to minimize student conflicts. I realize the importance of collaborating with academic teachers to ensure band students have grades that enable them to continue in the program.

Classified employees. It is important to cooperate with all school employees. I try to thank regularly those office workers who assist and respond to requests. When we had a cake-bake as part of a spirit campaign during band camp, the office assistants were invited to be our judges. When we have band food (usually a meal provided by parents when students are at school for extended periods and also on band trips), we have delivered leftovers to the custodians and regularly invite bus drivers to eat with us on trips. As much as possible, we clean our own messes and try to make it easy for custodial staff to do their jobs.

Parents are vital to our band program, especially our marching band. All of our rehearsals are open to parents. I send lots of compliments about their children through facebook, email, postcards and face to face. I try to cc parents when I send an email or other written message to the student.

I provide a seminar for parents about preparing for college from a music perspective using examples of former students and what worked for them.

Community. I have a “Band Friendly” list on our band site to recognize businesses and individuals who help our program. I write positive reviews on local business facebook pages. Then, when we ask for their support (advertisements, uniforms, fundraising), they are more willing to help.

Students. I invest heavily in **Relationship Building** (See below).

Technology

Students are proficient and comfortable using technology and I use a variety both in and out of the classroom, including Powerpoint announcements, Youtube to share music examples and performances for review and comment, a band Blog that had over 30,000 views during the school year, a Facebook page, and a Twitter account. I scanned and posted the pep band music so students can quickly access the music via iPad at home, during rehearsals and at performances. I have used Skype to provide remote music instruction and regularly use Smartmusic (a practice enhancing software) both in classroom and individual private coaching sessions. Students and their parents have access to my cell phone, which I do use for calling, texting, plus picture and video making. I use portable digital recorders as well as a video camera for recording, projecting for classroom review and posting or sharing. I have used Skype for remote individual instruction.

Strengths and Experiences

Personality/ Relationship Building. I want to know my students. By knowing their situations *outside* of the classroom (family, financial, etc) I can better know how to most effectively relate to them in the classroom. If I see on facebook that the family cat died the night before, I can understand and empathize with a mood that could otherwise be misidentified as a bad attitude. A phrase I use periodically is that I “*love, admire and respect*” my students, and they know it. My office desk tends to be a hang out area before and after school and rehearsals. And when students are congregating in the band room, I often join them. My personality also enhances interactions with colleagues and staff as we share students while collaborating and coordinating facilities and schedules.

Recruiting, Retaining and Reaching out. Building an instrumental program involves 1) Recruiting beginners (but also middle/high school students for auxiliary ensembles and participation). Middle schoolers should perceive that band can be cool. 2) Retaining students as they transition from middle to high school is crucial as that is typically where there is much fall out. 3) Reaching out to the public through entertaining performances.

Proficiency /Expertise. I have soloed with a cultural exchange ensemble that toured Europe and Russia, have won a college's Concerto Competition, perform in a variety of community ensembles and have performed on university faculty recitals. Students need to know that I know what I'm talking about. And when I periodically use an opportunity to demonstrate a musical proficiency for them, it enhances that bond. They want to get better, but they need to trust that I know how to help them achieve their goal. Because of my expertise and the relationship I have with them, they want to do what I ask.

Honesty / Integrity. My mission statement for a Band Handbook I wrote is "*Achieving Excellence with Honesty and Respect*". Students are bombarded with tainted definitions and examples of what truthfulness is from television, music, parents and friends. I invest significant time defining, expecting and modeling honesty and integrity. They know that the teacher they see in my classroom is who I am both in and out of the classroom; on and off campus.

Enthusiasm PLUS Experience. I still have the enthusiasm of a young teacher. What's more, I also bring thirty years of business experience that helps me organize and operate efficiently and effectively. In fact, I have used my business experience to advise and mentor students who are considering a career in business.

Objective

Part time since I returned to public school education fifteen years ago, I have retired, and now a goal is to share my education experience and expertise to continue to improve the lives of students and motivate them to develop music skills and a love of music that will last a lifetime.

Profile and Proficiencies

I am Indiana licensed (#1089847, Bulletin 400) for K-12 Music with experience in grades 6-12 and at the college level. I have played in a Community Band and in several ensembles at Huntington University (Symphonic Band, Orchestra, Musical Pit Ensembles). I have performed in faculty recitals and have provided individualized instruction in my home, at school, at the university and via Skype. I manage multiple domains, weblogs and social media accounts for myself and others, am fluent in PC and Mac environments utilizing programs and services including Office, contact management, email marketing, blogging, website design, Skype, Zoom, music software (Finale, Smartmusic, MuseScore, GarageBand) and related apps (tuners, metronomes). I have worked in sales and management, started a business, hired and trained employees, developed, documented and supported software and know how to respond, communicate, encourage, organize, criticize and accept criticism. I ask questions to qualify answers, set and follow agendas, oversee or actively participate in meetings, hire, train and manage employees, teach students and interact comfortably, fluently and frequently with parents. I have written business and educational contracts, handbooks, significantly successful grants, organized new band uniform selection and planned overnight trips. Within both the corporate and education world, from being on the top and the bottom, I understand, respect and work well within a chain of command.

Initiatives in Teaching Position

Invited 8th grade participants. In 2013, 100% of the first group of 8th grade marchers are graduating as 5-yr seniors in the band program.

Color Guard w/multiple custom uniforms and flag equipment. Previously, there was a uniform used multiple years and one standard school colored flag. I published a "needs" list that included a line item for \$5000 for uniforms and equipment for the color guard. (See gift below).

Digitized Pep Band Folders Music for students to download and view from school-provided iPads. Saved thousands of pages of copying. iPads used in performances at home basketball games, at a college basketball game and at the local YMCA.

First collaboration of our Pep Bands with Grace College. In return for taking our band there to supplement their small ensemble, we received a \$500 reimbursement – three times to date.

Increased communication:

- A web/blog is used to post an online calendar, weekly and as-needed announcements, maps to competition areas, information about scholarships and other areas of interest. Students and parents can SUBSCRIBE to receive email notification of updates. Over 32,000 visits in 2012.
- A Face Book Page is a more student-oriented and focused duplication of much of what goes on the web/blog.
- A Twitter Account is used to provide timely announcements, i.e. an updated estimated time of arrival back to the school from an away trip.

Student Participation in Huntington University Symphonic Band. I have been encouraging this and providing transportation for several years. One year, we had 12 students involved and I had to coordinate an activity bus for transportation twice weekly.

Collegiate Presentation/Discussion. In each of my fifteen years locally, I have invited students and parents to a presentation of strategies and successes aimed at helping systematic and strategic preparation for college from musical, academic and financial perspectives, featuring several specific student success stories of scholarships and packages. One student credited this presentation with her receiving over \$4000 in scholarships.

Crossmen Drum & Bugle Corps to Huntington – twice. The Crossmen are consistently in the top 10-12 Drum Corps International (DCI) World Championships. I coordinated two visits. The first was a two night stay with all day rehearsals and a community open rehearsal. I coordinated housing, facilities, and rehearsal fields for about 150 people arriving in 4 tour busses, two semi trucks and two RV's. This was a tremendous opportunity for our students to observe higher-level rehearsal techniques. Our students wanted to incorporate several of their practices, including their 30-second water breaks.

Grants and Gifts Solicitation.

- \$5000 gift by private doner after I announced the above initiative to better equip our color guard with multiple custom outfits and equipment.
- Scholarship for Private Lessons. Another private gift for use to provide a year's worth of private music instruction for a promising, but financially hindered student. That student will be graduating as a Music Education major from a major Indiana university next year.
- \$500 general fund gift as a result of a letter to the Lafontaine Arts Council.
- \$400 individual student scholarships from Sigma Eta Sorority after successful auditions
- \$1900 grant for equipment from approved grant request to Ecolab
- \$1600 grant for equipment from senior class. Other director did the paperwork for the equipment I suggested we apply for.