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Socio-musical connections and teacher identity development in a university methods course ...

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Socio-Musical Connections and Teacher Identity Development in a University Methods Course and Community Youth Symphony Partnership[3]

Abstract

In this article we describe the experiences of nine preservice music teachers enrolled in the first semester of a newly designed instrumental methods course in which a traditional lecture format was replaced with experiential, student-driven, service-oriented activities. Students were entrusted with organizing and directing a community youth symphony, including sharing of teaching and all administrative responsibilities (e.g., recruiting, fundraising, repertoire selection, community outreach). While the first author was the professor and designer of the course, the second author acted as an outside observer, collecting data through rehearsal observations, student interviews, and study of course artifacts. Findings suggest that students benefitted from opportunities to observe and collaborate with the professor and classmates in real-world teaching settings. Furthermore, students demonstrated evidence of growth and maturation over the course of the semester in teaching skills, professional identity, and socio-musical connections. The article closes with a description of how student recommendations for course improvement were implemented in subsequent semesters.

Keywords
action research, preservice teachers, student-directed learning, teacher identity, university-community partnership

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In their preservice and early years of inservice teaching, music educators make a gradual shift from "student" to "teacher" in identity as well as task orientation (Berg & Miksza, 2010; Miksza & Berg, 2013; Scheib et al., 2007). Undergraduate preservice teachers often experience a transitional state in which they become less dependent upon their previous experience as secondary students (often with a heavy emphasis on performance and/or as passive receivers of information), and create a new identity of music director or provider of information (Campbell, 1999; Conkling, 2003; Scheib et al., 2007). In these early years, however, many do not yet see themselves as constructors of musical knowledge. For example, young educators may still focus their attention more on self-survival and teacher tasks than on student impact (Berg & Miksza, 2010; Calderhead & Robson, 1991; Fuller & Bown, 1975).

While university methods classes are intended to help music students transition into their new identities as music educators, research suggests that methods courses are not always effective in this pursuit. For example, Conway (2002) found that beginning music teachers at one large university considered applied lessons and field experiences to be most valuable to their careers, and teacher education courses to be least valuable. According to Darling-Hammond (2000), new teachers are often dissatisfied with the preservice preparation they received, in regards to effective planning and teaching, diagnosing problems, and adapting approaches to meet student needs.

Traditional music teacher preparation programs that emphasize classwork over practical teaching experiences may reinforce a "student" identity rather than promoting one of "teacher." As Conkling (2004) suggests, "Little of the content or format of those

methods classes bears directly on becoming a teacher, and much of it is aimed at reminding the student that he [or she] is, after all, a student" (p. 6). Ballantyne and Packer (2004) recommended that music preservice programs should focus more on pedagogical content knowledge and other professional aspects of music teaching, while Campbell (1999) suggested that preservice teachers need better support in developing dispositions as teachers, as well as in understanding the complexities of the teaching profession.

Methods courses that are overly prescriptive do not allow for flexibility in teacher approach or student needs (Robbins, 1993), which stands in contrast to the needs of preservice teachers to try on new and multiple perspectives while developing a "teacher" identity (Ferguson, 2003). Scheib (2012) advocated for a more dialogic methods course to empower preservice teachers, as opposed to the "front-loaded lecture" approach (p. 103) in which students passively engage (or, perhaps more accurately, *dis*engage) with course content. A more authentic learning context shows influences upon the development of general pedagogical knowledge, knowledge of self, and professional perspectives (Haston & Russell, 2012). Similarly, research suggests that preservice music teachers require influential models, "hands-on" opportunities to practice teaching and reflection, feedback (especially from peers), and direct responsibility for growth in order to be successful (Conkling, 2003; Legette, 2013; Roulston, Legette, & Womack, 2005).

Music teacher educators have advocated for increased university-community partnerships and collaborative learning environments in order to improve learning, provide real-world experience and application to practice, build community programs, and foster collegial relations between preservice teachers and other professionals (Brophy, 2011; Burton & Greher, 2007; Conkling, 2004, 2007; Conkling & Henry, 1999,

2002). With a recently increased emphasis on testing and teacher accountability in educational programs, Burton and Greher offered:

> Preparing new music teachers to face the increased challenges awaiting them as they enter the field requires a rethinking of traditional curricular practice rooted in learning about teaching toward practice that favors a concentrated emphasis on multiple, context-specific, field-based experiences. (2011, p. 105).

Collaborative partnerships with other institutions provide preservice teachers with opportunities to observe and learn from others, exercise and experiment with a variety of teaching strategies, and gain fresh perspectives that are needed in a changing educational climate (Bresler, 2002; Conkling, 2004, 2007; Kruse, 2011). Burton (2011) emphasized the importance of partnerships that encourage the development of "perspective consciousness" (i.e., an individual's awareness that his or her perspective is not universal but has been influenced by situatedness in one's own culture), in order to foster increased cultural competency and curricular innovation. Furthermore, Carlisle (2011) has posited that the multiple perspectives inherent in community-university collaborations provide a richness of experience and understanding that can generate "cultural oases" (p. 148) in communities that lack administrative support for arts education.

University-Community Partnership

In this article we describe the experiences of university students in the inaugural semester of a university-community partnership, in which nine university students were entrusted with the revitalization and expansion of a youth symphony program. The youth symphony, which had been a part of the community for over 50 years, was taken on as a university project after the symphony board had deliberated shutting down the program

due to low enrollment. At the project's inception, the youth symphony consisted of 19 students (ages 12-16) who played string, woodwind, brass instruments and/or piano, and whose formal music training ranged from 1 to 12 years. The professor volunteered to take over leadership of the ensemble, utilizing the pedagogical and administrative assistance of university students. In the course that developed out of this partnership, a more traditional lecture format was replaced by five student-directed, experiential learning activities each week, as follows:

1. *Youth symphony rehearsals*, in which university students taught youth symphony members in small and large groups. Each student had at least two opportunities per semester to direct the entire ensemble, and students also led other sectional rehearsals and pullout lessons as needed.

2. *Side-by-side performance* with youth symphony members during rehearsals and in community outreach events. University students played in the orchestra on primary and secondary instruments, as needed (and as determined by student-led committees; see #3 below).

3. *Administrative committee meetings*, in which university students divided up self-directed responsibilities such as recruiting, fundraising, public relations, community outreach, repertoire management, and technology. Students were entrusted with all aspects of youth symphony management, including selection of repertoire, grant writing, community outreach, website design, event scheduling, communication with parents, etc.

4. *Regular online interaction* with peers through Facebook and Blackboard Discussion groups. A private Facebook group was established as an informal means of continual communication throughout the week, as committees would meet and report to

others in the course. University students used this group to brainstorm, poll one another about ideas, hold votes, and clarify preparatory issues for ensemble rehearsals. Blackboard Discussion was used as a formal means of completing graded coursework, where students were required to post and subsequently reply to each others' posted (a) teaching reflections, and (b) reflections on reading assignments.

5. *Meetings with the professor,* to organize, plan, and report on administrative duties. In each of these settings, university students engaged in student-initiated teaching activities, mentoring, and administrative work, which provided them with real-life, experiential opportunities to help prepare them for future careers.

Purpose

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the effectiveness of the inaugural semester of the youth symphony partnership, with an intention to (a) understand the perceptions and growth of university students as they participated in the course, and (b) determine ways in which the project could be improved in future semesters. This study incorporated tenets of case study and action research (Noffke, 2009; Noffke & Somekh, 2011; Stake, 1995). While our research provides a thorough description of the workings of a bounded system or "case," it also works as action research in two ways. First, university students acted as equal participants in the revitalization and expansion of the youth symphony, under the first author's facilitation as director of the youth symphony. Second, interview and observation data were used to inform future youth symphony structures and work as action cycles of continued feedback and improvement.

The following questions guided our inquiry: What educational and experiential gains resulted from this university-community parternship? How did preservice teachers

enrolled in the methods course relate to youth symphony students? How could the course be improved in the future?

Method

Since the first author was the instructor of the course and facilitator of all student-led activities with the youth symphony students, only the second author was responsible for recruiting individual interview participants, so as to reduce the risk of coercion. The second author was also responsible for conducting all interviews in order to further maintain confidentiality and reduce the risk of response bias.

Participants

Preservice participants included eight university juniors and seniors with a variety of primary instrument expertise (string, brass, woodwind, percussion). One additional graduate student (female, string) signed up for the course as an elective, and also volunteered to participate in the research. Before taking this course, the university students' teaching experience had primarily consisted of peer teaching episodes in two introductory general methods courses, with some limited K-12 classroom observations. While other university students had volunteered for the youth symphony on an individual basis in previous years, none of the present research participants (with the exception of the graduate student) had been involved with the youth symphony before this project.

Data Collection

Data collection took place for the period of one university semester. The second author conducted individual interviews before and/or after rehearsals and at other times when the first author was not present. Six students volunteered to participate in individual interviews, which lasted approximately 10-60 minutes each. At the end of the semester,

the second author conducted a group interview with all nine student participants that lasted approximately 60 minutes. The second author also took observation notes during youth symphony rehearsals and studied course artifacts such as syllabi, lesson plans, and documents related to youth symphony administration.

We adapted the orchestra rehearsal observation prompt and research interview protocol used by Hendricks (2014), which we customized for the particular needs and issues of this project. As shown in Appendix A, the interview protocol was designed to ascertain the influence of the project upon university students by addressing issues of students' beliefs, values, expectations, and musical experiences before, during, and at the end of the project. We also asked students to address issues related to their beliefs, expectations, and experiences serving as a teacher and mentor to youth symphony members. Finally, we asked students for specific feedback as to how the project could be improved in future semesters. Appendix B shows the observation prompt used by the second author to track student behaviors and activities during youth symphony rehearsals.

Analysis and Results

The second author transcribed interviews and immediately removed or replaced names of people and places mentioned in the interviews and observation notes. Our method of data analysis followed the Creswell (1998) "data analysis spiral" in that it involved recurring cycles of data managing; reading and memoing; describing, classifying, and interpreting; and representing and visualizing (p. 143). Each author coded data from interviews, observations, and artifacts independently according to the aforementioned research questions, after which both authors triangulated findings by comparing and contrasting independently-analyzed codes for each data type. Differences in each author's coding

results were minimal, and negotiations resulted primarily in renaming, combining, or dividing code categories. We then sorted the coded data together to highlight recurrent or especially relevant themes.

Finally, the second author engaged in member checks by verifying with research participants that data were represented accurately, and that our interpretations reflected participant perceptions of the experience. Participants offered no corrections to the quotes or analysis. Our findings are shared below, organized by research question and corresponding emergent themes.

1. What Educational and Experiential Gains Resulted From This University-Community Partnership?

Three primary themes emerged regarding educational and experiential gains: (a) modeling and collaboration with the university professor and university student peers; (b) realistic experiences to prepare students for future careers; and (c) development in identity as teachers over the course of the semester, as a result of students' opportunities to practice and learn from their experiences. Each of these themes is presented below.

Modeling and collaboration. One of the benefits voiced by students enrolled in the course was the opportunity for students to teach side-by-side with their professor, and to witness their professor model teaching techniques that might only be discussed (but not demonstrated) in other classes. According to Erica:

> It's definitely been nice applying what I've learned in class to the group here,
> because [our professor] is one of the teachers in there so she makes sure that she
> is applying what she teaches us. . . . Sometimes you'll get teachers who teach one
> thing but do something different. You can watch it work, so if you had any

doubts before, you don't now. It's great. . . . The [students] who are not involved in any mentoring experience don't have that same aspect. . . . It's been nice to see what works in a real-life setting.

In addition to observing the professor teach youth orchestra members, the students also observed each other on the podium and in small-group teaching settings. These peer modeling examples served as learning opportunities as well. Students reflected on their own teaching episodes and also offered feedback to their colleagues online, through Blackboard discussions and comments on the course's private Facebook page.

Students also collaborated with one another through student-led committees, which focused on different administrative aspects of running a youth symphony (e.g., recruiting, repertoire selection, advocacy, fundraising). Collaboration between class members was a weekly practice, as students were required to meet outside of class to discuss and execute their committee-based workload. Carl described how the cooperative opportunities were unique to his teacher education experience: "I haven't really ever had to sit down and collaborate with somebody and plan what we were going to do together. And, like, the committee meetings, I've never really done anything like that." He explained further how the committees shared equal responsibility:

> Normally when I've worked with people in the past, it's been, like, I came up with an idea and they offered their opinions on the idea I came up with, and if there was something that was good enough that the group came up with, we added it. It was never really collaborative [like this].

A variety of committee responsibilities were divided up among the student members. If students did not take care of duties assigned to them, they were not

completed. Students suggested that they learned quickly about the need to take care of their responsibilities rather than let down themselves, their peers, the youth orchestra members, their teacher, and even members of the community.

Realistic experiences. Many university students viewed the project as a realistic preview of what they would encounter in their future careers. According to Carl, "[the course is] a great idea and I think you gain more from this kind of class that you do just sitting in a class listening to people who have done it before." Kelly, a university senior, described how the experience prepared her for her first teaching job:

> I think this was a good example of a first-year teaching experience because this is essentially starting over from scratch, because we have a new teacher and almost all new kids. So this was a very good example of what it would be like to start your program.

Kelly also spoke of the interconnectivity she experienced between the partnership, her penultimate semester practicum placements, and upcoming student teaching semester:

> The level of work that we put into [the youth symphony] is very reflective of [real-world experience] . . . We are all right at the point [in our university careers] where we are [preparing for] student teaching so we can make those educated decisions and take thought-out risks.

Kelly further explained that, by this point in her undergraduate career, she had had enough experience working with students in the field (e.g., field experiences, observing teachers and students, teaching private lessons), that she felt she could make mistakes in this class and not be judged by her peers and/or the youth orchestra members. This allowed her an opportunity to experiment with approaches she might not have

otherwise tried had she taken this course earlier in her coursework or in a more traditional setting. She further suggested that her age and preparation in the program made her better able to utilize suggestions from peers, as compared with some of her younger classmates. Holly compared her deeper level of pedagogical understanding with that of less-experienced students: "I don't know if they can really be, like, 'I just know it didn't work.' And I can be like, 'I know it didn't work and here's what I think could improve it.'"

Development of teacher identity. Analysis of observation notes and interviews revealed growth and maturation in the students over the course of the semester, as they came to understand and accept the real-life responsibilities this course presented to them. As the semester progressed, the university students demonstrated a shift in identity from university students to teachers and mentors to the youth orchestra members. This included an increased awareness of the impact that they had on student learning, as well as an evolution in perceptions from their own concerns to those of the students.

In the group interview at the end of the semester, for example, Aaron discussed the mentorship role the university students assumed toward the youth orchestra members: "They really wanted to make us happy, which was really cool, you know. I know you won't get that all the time from your kids but it was really nice to just watch them grow. It was a teacher moment."

Senior university student Evan similarly described his satisfaction in coming to see how his teaching made a difference:

They just lit up whenever [we helped them do] something correct. Whenever they did something wrong, or I don't know if you want to call it wrong, but whenever

they didn't do something the best way, and you explained something to them, you could see how much it bothered them to not get something right. I remember there was just this small articulation problem, or difference between the group so I went and talked to Hailey [youth orchestra member] and said, 'Hey let's do it like this,' and she was really disappointed that she got it wrong. But then when she did it right, she was all happy again.

Erica, a student in her last semester of coursework, smiled as she recalled her own growth experiences throughout the course:

Being challenged has made me really step up to the plate and get myself ready even though I felt unprepared [in this setting]. I think I'm a lot more capable of running a band rehearsal…now that practicum and [the youth symphony] are finishing up for the semester, I feel a lot more comfortable in that setting. I think I'll do much better.

Students in the class were not the only ones who grew throughout the experience. The university students also described how they witnessed the youth orchestra members mature as musicians and leaders. Evan said, "When kids enjoy being where they want to be and are learning, they start picking up things that their teachers are telling them." He continued by describing a situation in the concert the day before, in which the youth symphony concertmaster demonstrated her own developing independence and leadership:

Like, yesterday, when the strings were tuning, [our professor] has this thing where she starts with the cellos and then the concertmaster points to each section when to tune; and [the concertmaster] did that last night when we were on stage and I thought that was really neat to see that; you know, she's really been affected by

this program. And she was a girl here last year – one of the really few students [in the program last year] – and just that she's enjoying this so much more.

While Evan explained his point, his fellow class members in the group interview nodded and smiled in agreement, recalling the concert from the previous afternoon. Evan recalled, "It was amazing. I was just standing there, kind of like, 'Huhhhh…' and she [concertmaster] looks at me and goes [nods to invite him to tune]." Evan's classmates chuckled and smiled in agreement. "Seeing that was pretty phenomenal. Kind of life-changing in a way. To think that you have that big of an impact on your students in such a little amount of time, it's amazing…those kids pick up on that."

2. How Did Preservice Teachers Enrolled in the Methods Course Relate to Youth Symphony Students?

Development of socio-musical connections. One major theme that emerged from the data involved the socio-musical connections that university students made over time with each other, with the professor, and with the members of the youth symphony. This was the first such partnership that any of these university students had undertaken, and their sense of ownership and responsibility for the youth symphony students was not immediate. However, by the end of the semester, the youth symphony and university students had developed a rich rapport with one another. We observed this gradual development of socio-musical connection in three stages: (a) initial hesitancy, (b) creating a safe space, and (c) ownership of the ensemble.

Initial hesitancy. Carl described his initial hesitancy about working so closely with youth symphony students:

To find out that . . . we were going to be working with real kids for a long period of time and not just go in and give a lesson and leave, it was kind of scary at first. Just knowing that we were going to have that much experience. This was the first ensemble of students that I was ever part of or in charge of or in front of, ever.

Similarly, observation notes from the first week's mid-rehearsal break described university students remaining on one side of the room, with youth orchestra members on another, until the groups cautiously began to mingle after some verbal encouragement from the course instructor. An introductory activity (led by a university student in order to "break the ice") provided a chance for students to relax, but it was evident from the segregation in the room that neither university students nor youth symphony members were comfortable with one another. By the third week, however, university students and youth orchestra members were observed easily chatting together over snacks during the rehearsal break.

Creating an emotionally safe environment. Over the course of the semester, the university and youth symphony students displayed evidence that they had become more comfortable with one another. In more than one individual interview and the culminating group interview, students mentioned the practice of creating a supportive community in which to make music with one another. When considering the benefits of the partnership, Rachel suggested, "I think it's good to show that this is . . . the benefit of creating a safe psychological environment, which is something [our professor] refers to very often," said Rachel. In reference to the concertmaster illustration shared by Evan (above), Rachel explained:

But this is very obvious: [the concertmaster] felt safe enough to do that in front of our entire ensemble plus everyone in the audience . . . So that just shows the level that we've gotten it to, and the fact that our kids felt comfortable being under a completely different conductor, were able to work with all of us at least . . . twice, and then they actually participated gradually more and more, the more they felt able to take those risks.

Ownership of the ensemble. As evidenced by Rachel's quote above and many other similar comments, we noted subtle changes in the way university students referred to the youth symphony students throughout the course of the semester, including a gradual evolution in pronouns from "them" and "us" to "we" and "our." Furthermore, in the university students' final interview, several students alluded to the sense of ownership they had developed for the youth symphony over the course of the semester, along with their new desire to continue to work with the ensemble through to the end of the academic year rather than a mere semester. Rachel expressed, "Even, like, next semester, I'm unable to take the class for credit because I don't have the room for it, but I still, I want to come back and I plan on it. . .. I want to be part of helping out because if I don't, I kind of feel like I'm abandoning my ensemble."

3. How Could the Course Be Improved in the Future?

In their interviews, the university student participants also offered suggestions about how to improve the course for future semesters. Themes derived from the data included (a) clarifying administrative committee responsibilities, (b) providing more breadth of issues that students might face in future classrooms, (c) allowing students equal opportunities to perform on secondary instruments, and (d) expanding the scope of

the course to include interactions with other community ensembles and university music education courses. These suggestions are further described below.

Clarifying committee responsibilities. The committee aspect of the course was new for all of these students and, while it offered a unique means of working with peers, it also provided challenges, such as organizing meeting times and equal sharing of responsibilities. Leah observed the difficulties of meeting up with members of her committee: "I've really liked working with [university peers]. Especially with music students, it's hard to get them all in the same place at the same time to work on something . . . so that's a challenge. Just finding time to meet." Leah further explained the challenge that some students experienced in taking their committee responsibilities seriously:

> I feel like with so many students…everybody thinks that someone else will do something. Especially with committees. Everything ends up working out, but I think there's less initiative-taking than what there might be in a slightly more realistic situation. I think it's hard to re-create the idea that you are actually in charge and that you are the one who has to take the initiative. Because [in this project] you're supposed to be in charge and important.

She clarified that in her committee, some members took on more weight than others, "not because they are necessarily slacking off and can't do it but because other people take the initiative." She suggested modifying the committee format in some manner so that responsibilities would be more equally divided.

Providing breadth of experience. While students appreciated the opportunity to delve into committee work, they also expressed a desire to know what other committees

were doing and to glean more from their experience. Paul suggested that students have the opportunity for breadth rather than just depth of material:

> One thing that I think might be good to change is – I like the idea of having us all in committees to do the different things…kind of spread the leadership around – but at the same time, I think there needs to be more of all of us doing everything. At least a little bit . . . I was in the outreach and recruitment [committee] but I didn't do any of the repertoire stuff and you know, this was my first experience ever with string students because I was always in band…so I wish I could've been, you know, more with the repertoire and more with the other committees just to get a better grasp on everything.

Secondary instruments. One goal of the partnership was to allow preservice teachers opportunities to perform on secondary instruments with the youth symphony. However, due to a need to fill out certain sections of the orchestra, some students were asked to play on their primary instruments instead. Ana expressed her awareness of this conundrum, while also expressing her regret that she was not given the same opportunity to develop skills on a secondary instrument, as were some of her peers:

> I do wish that I would've been able to play a secondary rather than my primary but I understand that we have to be semi-competent on that secondary or have the primary covered . . . I think it's a good opportunity for us play our instruments if we want, but I wish there would be more opportunity. We take our [instrumental techniques] classes but after we are done, we don't have the opportunity to keep our chops up.

Expanding the scope of the course. An additional suggestion was to find opportunities for the youth symphony to play with other ensembles in the community. Erica observed: "I think they should do sister concerts with the big people [resident university/community ensemble]. I think that would be cool for them to sit next to each other, with people who have a little more experience. Like a side-by-side." Finally, other students expressed a desire for partnership experiences with other ensemble types, suggesting that it might be helpful to start programs with a youth band or youth choir.

Summary of Findings and Later Development

This research informed the first phase of a university-community partnership in which university instrumental methods students took on full responsibilities of organizing and directing a community youth symphony. The intent of the partnership was to revitalize a community program that, similar to those described by Carlisle (2011), was in need of support. Through analysis of observation notes and student interviews, we discovered that students experienced a number of gains by taking this partnership-based course. First, students had opportunities to observe and learn from the university professor and one another in a realistic teaching setting, as well as opportunities to collaborate and provide feedback to one another. The importance of these opportunities has been highlighted in previous research by Conkling (2003), who found that preservice teachers looked for expert models and sought out other practitioners and peers for feedback and support when shaping teacher identities.

We further noted a marked change over the course of the semester in the university students' maturation from "students" to "teachers" through their gradual awareness of educational impact, as well as their development of concern from self to

students. Similarly, we witnessed an evolution in university students' sense of relatedness and socio-musical connection with the youth symphony students. These findings align with models of "early" versus "late" teacher concern, in which teachers' perceptions and insights develop from concern of self, to concern about teaching tasks, to concerns about students and teaching impact (Fuller, 1969; Fuller & Bown, 1975; see also Conway & Clark, 2003; Miksza & Berg, 2013). This shift over the course of one semester suggests to us that the hands-on, collaborative experiences were effective in helping preservice teachers develop their teacher identities.

Areas of Improvement and Subsequent Changes

Students in this first phase of the project had a number of constructive comments and recommendations for improvement of the course in future semesters. As this was a continuing endeavor, these suggestions and recommendations were implemented into subsequent semesters and corresponding research cycles, as described below.

First, students recommended better clarification of committee responsibilities, as well as individual responsibilities within each committee. This issue was addressed in later semesters by having a graduate assistant meet weekly with each committee outside of class time to help facilitate (but not control) conversations and delegation of responsibilities.

Second, university students expressed a desire to learn more about what other committees were doing, so that they would have more working knowledge of other administrative concerns that they would similarly face in their future careers. This concern was addressed in later semesters by providing more in-class time for committees

to report their work to one another, and by encouraging more use of the private Facebook page as an opportunity to share ideas between committees.

Third, university students expressed a desire to play more on secondary instruments, since many students were asked to play on primary instruments in order to fill out the ensemble. As youth symphony numbers grew in subsequent semesters, students had more opportunity to decide for themselves which instruments they would like to perform in the ensemble.

Finally, students expressed a desire to engage more in community outreach, including performing with other community ensembles. As a result, later cohorts paired up with an adult amateur orchestra in the community, providing intergenerational interactions and a sense of community awareness. Furthermore, students were encouraged to reach out to area retirement homes and hospitals to engage youth symphony students in community service projects.

Conclusion and Implications

This research has demonstrated the strengths of the university-community partnership while also identifying recommendations for the improvement of the project in future semesters. Future research may include a longitudinal study on the success of this partnership and the effect of this program on local school string programs.

Because the experiences are situated in a particular context, we do not attempt to offer specific recommendations or implications for others outside of our community. However, we are hopeful that sharing our experiences may offer ideas or spark interest in other music teacher educators who are interested in providing their students with similar practical, hands-on music teacher education experiences.

The impact upon teacher preparation and identity development that this course had upon university students was evident by the end of the semester; however, similar to other research cited previously, it took time and effort for students to develop from their more familiar roles as students to that of responsible and committed teachers. We suggest, therefore, that preservice teachers need an abundance of practicum opportunities throughout their preservice experience and in a variety of contexts, in order to fully develop into competent and confident music teachers. As Kruse (2011) has suggested,

> In the case of music teaching and learning, knowledge and experience often exhibit a conflicting and disparate relationship. Content knowledge is needed for experiences to occur, but experiences ultimately influence and redefine this knowledge for future use. (p. 116)

We found that this university-community partnership – in which preservice teachers were able to immediately put learning into practice – offered possibilities for meaningful learning while also fostering expansion and flexibility of perspectives and teaching approaches. Through subsequent semesters and project iterations, the professor and students gradually learned together how to balance structure and freedom, safety and risk-taking, in order to provide an optimal environment for growth.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol

Interview questions were selected from the following list:

A. Background information
    1. Musical background of family and student
    2. Formal music training (in school, private lessons, etc.)
    3. Musical friends, teachers, mentors, and other influences
    4. Support of involvement in this ensemble (from friends, teachers, mentors, etc.)
    5. Decision to assist with this ensemble

B. Beliefs, values, expectations
    1. Beliefs about own teaching potential
    2. Goals and expectations for being part of this teaching/mentoring opportunity

C. Teaching/mentoring experience in the ensemble
    1. Compare to previous experience working with this ensemble (confidence?)
    2. Experience working with colleagues in mentor experience
    3. Compare/contrast long- and short-term mentoring opportunities

D. Teaching/mentoring experience outside the ensemble
    1. Other opportunities to work with youth
    2. Compare long-term to short-term mentoring opportunities
    3. Experience working with collegiate colleagues

E. Personal investment in this specific teaching/mentoring activity
    1. Reasons why desired to be part of this experience
    2. How they feel it connects to their future experience
    3. Compare/contrast how it meets own expectations

F.   Specific course-related feedback
    1. How University students would compare this to other practicum
    2. Is it working for them?
    3. Is it worth the effort?
    4. Does any of the work seem unnecessary, or is it all relevant?
    5. What recommendations would they have for the future?

Appendix B

Observation Prompt

Observation notes were guided by the following criteria:

Youth Symphony Students:

Do students appear (overall):

1. Engaged in activity?
2. Involved in improving their personal performance?
3. To follow directions from college students?
4. To seek help from college students?

College Students:

Do the college students appear (overall):

1. Engaged in activity?
2. Involved in helping students' solve problems, answer questions, etc.?
3. Collaborative with other college students, if necessary, to answer a question, etc.?
4. Confident in assisting youth symphony members with their problems/answering questions?
5. Overall demeanor