

Connecting music and art through music technology

by

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Abstract

The lessons included in this report concentrate on the relationship between music and art and the expressiveness of musical improvisation and approximation. These lessons incorporate Wassily Kandinsky's approach to using music to create works of art and utilizing music technology to create a soundscape inspired by feelings, objects, and artistic creations. The activities presented in this report were developed from the growing need for students to be fluent in their knowledge of Digital Audio Workstations such as GarageBand and Soundtrap. Prior to this unit, students had a general understanding of modern band instruments like guitar, bass, keyboard, and drums. What was needed was a way to record their work and distribute it publicly. These lessons provided a way for students to begin their journey in discovering ways to use technology to create music.

The Kandinsky unit taught in the following lessons was inspired by a newfound love for teaching improvisation to students. During my time in the Masters' Program, I learned that improvisation in the classroom is wonderful when embraced by both the teacher and the students. I found that using multimedia techniques, such as art, instrumental performance, and music technology, make teaching improvisation less intimidating and more captivating. Using the methodologies taught in the Graduate Program have also informed my teaching in a transformative way. Using play and personal expression inspired by Orff and Gordon, my teaching has become more diverse and rewarding in ways that even my students have come to recognize. This growth in my teaching has led me to the unit presented in this report and I am looking forward to future developments as an educator that will allow me to build on the foundation provided from this program.

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Dedication

It is with genuine gratitude that I dedicate the following to my wonderful students included in this work. Without their eagerness, determination, and humor, none of my personal and professional growth would have been possible throughout the process of my graduate work. It is because of them that I continue to teach and fall in love with music every day.

Chapter 1 - Teaching Philosophy

As I have explored the realm of music and music education, I have seen musicians, educators, and students come up with unique ways to create music through the use of everyday materials. When I began to explore this idea, I figured it simply meant I could throw in the monotonous noises of my coffee pot brewing or the kitchen clock ticking into a new piece of music I was writing.

As an educator, however, this new way of thinking has taken on a whole new meaning. The various working parts in teaching the whole child are equivalent to my coffee pot and clock. While each part can stand on its own, together they become the orchestra of sounds in my kitchen. For instance, every classroom needs the *sound* of respect for each child's individual and diverse talents. This does not exist without a positive classroom environment. This classroom environment does not exist without the guidance of the teacher. This guidance from the educator does not continue without the possession of high expectations for each student. My goal as a teacher is to combine these *sounds* into one cohesive product to guide the development of the whole child in preparation to become a lifelong learner and participant in music.

In order to meet these expectations, one needs to look at the purpose of education in the first place. To address the technical definition of formal education, or "schooling", we can look to Estelle Jorgensen's writings (1997) for a practical answer. She gives two definitions; one being, "the place where instruction takes place" (p. 4) and the second more of a figurative perspective, meaning, "the undergoing of some sort of discipline desired by a particular sponsoring group, institution, or public" (p. 5). Both of these perspectives, not directly supported or encouraged by Jorgensen herself, offer little focus

on the individual student. In looking at the traditional Western view of formal education, it often is seen as a product-oriented institution, perhaps to a fault. The main goal of these institutions is to produce a body of citizens capable of adhering to and contributing to the society in which they live. If thinking about the environment of public education currently in the United States, the goal of education appears to be teaching to a test seemingly disregarding the departure of the individual student from the school and into the society. While this brief description of schooling provides a clearer picture of the current position of formal education, I would offer a perspective that includes the individual student's moral and emotional development into the schooling equation as well.

In a 2017 article, *Social and Emotional Learning and Teachers*, Schonert-Reichl encourages teachers to focus on a student's social and emotional development in their schooling in order to, "...create a generation of students who have acquired the social and emotional competencies they need for their adult roles as citizens, employees, parents, and volunteers" (p. 150). This focus on the development of personal awareness and self-discovery, I believe, is one of the purposes of formal education. Without it, humans do not reach their full potential. The process involved in learning of one's self should be one of the main goals of public education. In the defense of his mentor, Socrates, Plato reflects on such morals that clearly make their way into both philosopher's views of education, saying, "Nothing else I do but walk thereabouts convincing you, young and old men, to not caring so hardly your body and riches, but so how to improve as much as possible the soul, telling you that virtue does not come from possessions to men, but from virtue comes possessions and all other particular and public goods" (Plato, 2004, p. 57).

Both Socrates' and Plato's views of virtue and truth reflect prominently on their views of education. One of the most important factors is the development of one's own person.

This is the reason why education exists. As educational reforms take place and innovations in education continue to occur, we must not lose sight of the most important goal of public education which is to create an environment and facilitate learning in order to guide students to realizing their full potential. While producing an educated workforce and functional members of society are secondary goals of education, the most important and crucial responsibility I have as a teacher is to usher students into a place of self-growth and realization. Their human experience is the sole factor to a prosperous education throughout their lives.

That being said, music directly correlates to this self-actualization of the student. Music education provides students with an avenue toward truth and virtue, or the qualities mentioned previously. It would be negligent of me to ignore the quite universal view of many recent music education philosophers in that there is a consensus that music education, and music making itself, provides a deeper understanding of what it is to be human. The prominent philosopher, Bennett Reimer (1970), accurately states that, "To understand music is to understand its intimate connections to all of human experience" (p. 60). Music paves a pathway for personal expression, cultural understanding, aesthetic value, and fulfillment of potential. There is not a single living person who does not experience music in some form, therefore, making the purpose of music education that much more crucial to the overall educational system.

It is my belief that music, unlike other subjects, intimately connects the student with themselves. There is a level of sensitivity and awareness that comes with the process

of studying music. To reflect back on the previous discussion of a student's moral and emotional development, music offers a connection to these qualities in unique ways. I believe that a better explanation is that, "An important function of music, then, is the opportunity it gives for a variety of emotional expressions--the release of otherwise unexpressible thoughts and ideas..." (Merriam, p. 222). If a goal of education is for the moral development of the student, providing a mode of expression that uses nonverbal ways to communicate emotions or thoughts is a sure argument for the purpose and value of music education in our schools, and one I firmly support.

This brings focus to the next point of communication as a learning tool. It has previously been stated that music education is a mode of expression unlike any other. If music releases "unexpressible" thoughts or ideas, then that surely means students value the art for a form of communication in itself. It is my belief that the purpose of music education is to provide students with a way to express the virtue and truth that is fundamental to their self-discovery. Communicating these ideas are yet another function of music that is central to the purpose of music in universal education.

As a music educator, it is my responsibility to be an advocate for these functions and reasonings of music education in our public schools. Teachers are frequently overwhelmed with new curricula, technology, administrative objectives, and even the new students who may walk through their doors each year. When we keep in mind the emotional and communicative ways music benefits every student, educators can be a part of the conversation when the educational realm begins to change. I believe that losing sight of the reason we teach music in the first place is perhaps one of the most detrimental actions to keeping music education a foundational subject in public schools.

If these reasons are not at the forefront of our advocacy for the profession, music education will cease to change with a rapidly changing society.

If the purpose of both education and music education are looked at in tandem, there are similarities that those involved in education should not dismiss. There is great focus on “core” subjects in school curricula today. One of the first skills a young student learns, even before entering a public school institution, is how to speak. Both the purpose of schooling and the purpose of music education contain the skill of communication. Christopher Small (1998) puts it eloquently that, “every normally endowed human being is born with the gift of music no less than with the gift of speech” (p. 8). Communication is perhaps the most basic start to schooling, and subsequently music education, that exists. A child begins to speak in order to imitate and inform others of their needs and wants. As their education continues, well into their time in a public school institution, the level of communication becomes more in depth and meaningful. The same can be said about a student learning to use music as a form of communication. I believe that music can be just as an effective tool for communication, particularly in adolescent years, as learning to speak. If these are equal parts of an education, the inclusion of music directly supports an education in social and emotional learning. Teaching music, for me, is not teaching the notes in a staff or the chords on a guitar. It is, however, the education of an important way to communicate for a lifetime.

This idea of using musical arts as a way to educate a student’s emotional wellbeing and development directly correlates to the ancient search for truth and virtue, as previously referenced from Socrates and Plato. Whether the student is able to put words to it or not, music provides an avenue for self-discovery, a central part to what I

believe should be the goals of a public education. As an educator, I firmly agree with Elliot Eisner's (1991) take on being in the profession, that, "Teaching is a constructive activity whose efforts result in forms that can provide what the fine arts are intended to provide: a heightened consciousness and aesthetic experience" (p. 66). There is a certain level of awareness of the human experience that students understand from studying music. This can be from exposure to different cultures, experiencing the use of musical language, or simply the collaboration with others involved in the music making process. My goal is to involve students in this process and allow them to form a way of communicating through music in their own unique form.

I find inspiration for teaching through my colleagues and students, as I always desire to be in a process of continual growth. I believe that I closely relate to a view much like Elliot Eisner's. He explains through many of his writings that the arts have taught him a great deal about teaching. Not only does he believe that teaching is an art form in itself, but the processes of the arts resemble how students learn and what educational practices should look like to be successful (Eisner, 1991). The greatest achievement for myself as a music educator would be to allow my students to direct their own learning. I firmly believe that music is a form of expression and communication not available elsewhere and the way to unlock that is for students to be allowed the chance to explore for themselves. One of Eisner's statements resonates with me immensely, saying, "I have learned that knowledge cannot be reduced to what can be said" (p. 68). This is potentially the closest description of the meaning, purpose, and goal of music education. I want my students to have the ability to transcend communication through reading and writing, and have the ability to express through emotions and their own personal truth.

I have come to appreciate the stance in which another leader in music philosophy, Christopher Small, has on what it is to experience music. His term musicking provides a different perspective on the meaning of music. All people, no matter if they are the performers or the ushers in the aisles, participate in the experience of music (Small, 1998). Often, it is assumed that only the *elite* or *talented* are able to participate in music and this directly opposes what I believe music education should be. Small states that, “Most of the world’s musicians...have no use for musical scores and do not treasure musical works but simply play and sing, drawing on remembered melodies and rhythms and on their own powers of invention within the strict order of tradition” (p. 7). I believe a music classroom should look much like this, in the sense that students are encouraged to explore their own music making for themselves absent of any elitism or reservations. All of human experience contains musical moments and students deserve to experience these and develop their own meaning from them.

My stance has connections to previous music educators, but also to the current educational realm as we find it in the twenty-first century. I believe educators have felt the burden of school curriculums missing the opportunity to teach the whole child. Perhaps this is from testing, or teacher pay, or any common issues that come with the profession. But it seems there is a turning point in sight. The book, *Happy Teachers Change the World* (Hanh & Weare, 2017), represents this coming change, saying, “Our mission as teachers is not just to transmit knowledge, but to form human beings, to construct a worthy, beautiful human race...” (p. xvii). This statement is why I continue to pursue music education. Not as a career, not as simply a job, but because music is

essential to the human condition and the absence of it would result in the loss of beauty in the human race.

How My Philosophy Informs My Teaching

The lessons shown in this report have been developed with the proposed teaching philosophy in mind. The instruction during these classes focuses on abstract work that has a goal of students being able to simply create. These students were presented with an image after having previously experienced the use of color, texture, and inspiration in both art and music. The end result had students write a piece of music using GarageBand to create an abstract collection of sounds for themselves. Directly relating to my personal philosophy, these students were participants in music. Many had never had experience with any form of music technology. They had minimal experience with mixing or mastering sounds using these interfaces, but they were encouraged to search for themselves to create music that was their own. Many of the students took the image that was presented to them and were able to describe their music with how they felt or images they saw when using the picture as inspiration. They could communicate these feelings through music and, that in itself, is one of my main goals as a music educator.

My philosophy has changed greatly over the course of my teaching career, but my desire to teach the whole child and continue to be participants in music for the rest of their lives has not changed. I believe that the lessons taught from this experience allowed students to connect the technology they use every day to what they work on in music class. Not only did they discover new tools to help create the sounds they were looking for, but they also worked collaboratively and with an open mind. It is my hope that they

will continue to approach music in such a way that allows them to work with others and maintain a love of music in ways that will always enrich their lives.

Chapter 2 - Lesson Plan(s)

Lesson 1: Introduction to Kandinsky

Teacher:

- Rebekah Hade: Music, Signal Knob Middle School

Grade Level: 5th

Objectives:

- **Students will identify the relationship between art and music through improvisation and abstract techniques.**

Music National Standards (2014):

- MU:Cn11.0.5a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.

Materials of Instruction:

- **Song samples**
- **Projector**
- ***The Noisy Paint Box*, (book or video)**
- **Paper**
- **Markers, Crayons, Colored Pencils**
- **Piano (Or other instrument)**

Lesson Sequence:

Entry Activity:

- As students enter the classroom, the teacher will explain that today, students will be making a connection between music and art.
- The teacher will play (or read), *The Noisy Paint Box* by Barb Rosenstock (2014)
- Following the story, the teacher may answer any questions related to Kandinsky and his work.
 - Students may make connections between the colors of the illustrations and the references to sound and music.

Activity #1:

1. The teacher will ask the students, “What is improvisation?”
 - a. Students may already know the answer or may need some guidance.

- b. The teacher should use vocabulary such as *feeling, creating, and spontaneity*.
- 2. The teacher will then ask students to provide adjectives related to emotions or feelings.
 - . Example: A student calls out “angry”.
- a. The teacher will then play an improvisation on piano or another selected instrument with an “angry” feeling.
- b. Students may provide adjectives for several more examples.
- 3. Once students see the relationship between music and emotion, the teacher may assist them in making the connection to the previous story, Kandinsky, and his artwork.
- 4. The class should come to the conclusion that emotion in music can be reflected in art and vice versa.

Transition: The teacher will explain to the class that, “Today, we are going to pretend to be like Kandinsky. We are going to create images based on the music we hear and see what sorts of things we can improvise”.

- 1. *The teacher will provide an example of the activity. They should ask students to observe them creating an image while playing the song, “Sing”, by Travis.*
- 2. *The teacher should explain why they chose certain lines and colors when listening to the song.*

Activity #2:

- 1. The teacher should distribute any materials such as paper, markers, colored pencils, and crayons.
- 2. Students will be directed to fold their paper horizontally and then create four folds vertically, resulting in ten boxes. Students should be directed to number their boxes 1-10.
- 3. Students should be told to draw for the duration of each song clip.
- 4. The following songs should be played for students while they create abstract images. (*Songs have been clipped to ensure appropriateness and adequate time to create*):
 - a. *Chop Suey- System of a Down*
 - b. *Music Make You Lose Control- Missy Elliot*
 - c. *Big Green Tractor- Jason Aldean*
 - d. *Hard Times- Paramore*
 - e. *Waka Waka- Shakira*
 - f. *Over My Head- Alabama Shakes*
 - g. *Broken Halos- Chris Stapleton*
 - h. *I'd Do Anything- Simple Plan*
 - i. *Can't Hold Us- Mackelmore*
 - j. *They Don't Care About Us- Michael Jackson*

5. Once the students have completed their drawings, the teacher may ask them to reflect on how they felt during the activity.

Closure/Summative Assessment:

1. The teacher will ask students to do a gallery walk to observe their classmates' creations. Students should have time to discuss and compare the illustrations.
2. The teacher can examine the student's artwork and provide an informal assessment of the student's understanding of the relationship between music and art.

Lesson 2: Applying Kandinsky Techniques to Music Technology

Teacher:

- Rebekah Hade: Music, Signal Knob Middle School

Grade Level: 5th

Objectives:

- **Students will create improvisations using images and music technology.**
- **Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic Digital Audio Workstation knowledge.**

Music National Standards (2014):

- MU:Cn11.0.5a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
- MU:Cn10.0.5a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

Materials of Instruction:

- **1:1 Chromebooks**
- **Chrome Music Lab (*Kandinsky and Song Maker tabs*)**
- **List of Random Objects**
- **Emotion Wheel ([Wheel Decide](#), 2021)**

Lesson Sequence:

Entry Activity:

- The teacher will remind students of Kandinsky and the connection between music and art.

- The teacher should explain that the activity for the day is to create musical improvisations from images using music technology.

Activity #1:

1. The teacher will instruct students to go to <https://musiclab.chromeexperiments.com> (Chrome Music Lab)
2. Students should select the *Kandinsky* tab on the website.
3. The teacher will demonstrate that drawing certain shapes and using different colors changes the sound and outcome of the song they create.
4. The teacher will then inform the students that, using the Emotion Wheel, they will create images to reflect that feeling and play the result for the class.
 - a. *These performances can be used as a competition or simply for demonstration purposes.*
5. The teacher should provide 2-3 emotions and allow students time to create an image. After, students will play each creation for the class.

Transition: The teacher will explain to the class that, “Now that we have experienced using the Kandinsky tab, we will now move over to the Song Maker section”.

1. *The teacher will then demonstrate the fundamentals of Song Maker on Chrome Music Lab.*
2. *The teacher should explain that today, students will be creating images using Song Maker to create an abstract musical example.*
3. *The teacher will then draw an object out of the random word examples and create the image in Song Maker.*

Activity #2:

1. The teacher will ask a student to draw a random word. The class will then have adequate time to create their image.
2. Similar to the previous activity, students will be able to share their songs with the class.
 - a. *This can again be made into a competition between students, with each student voting on their favorite example.*
3. This activity should be repeated several times to ensure that students have maintained their understanding of the abstract work of Kandinsky and have developed a basic understanding of Chrome Music Lab.

Closure/Summative Assessment:

1. Once students have completed their last example, the teacher should take an informal assessment of students' understanding of Kandinsky and Chrome Music Lab.
2. The teacher will then explain that, “Tomorrow, we will begin using more complex music technology to create a musical work using one of Kandinsky’s artworks”.

Lesson 3: Using Kandinsky Artwork to Create in GarageBand

Teacher:

- Rebekah Hade: Music, Signal Knob Middle School

Grade Level: 5th

Objectives:

- **Students will create an original work using looping features in GarageBand.**
- **Students will describe personal choices based on inspiration from a piece of art.**
- **Students will demonstrate an understanding of basic Digital Audio Workstation knowledge.**

Music National Standards (2014):

- MU:Cn11.0.5a Demonstrate understanding of relationships between music and the other arts, other disciplines, varied contexts, and daily life.
- MU:Cn10.0.5a Demonstrate how interests, knowledge, and skills relate to personal choices and intent when creating, performing, and responding to music.

Materials of Instruction:

- **GarageBand (Or Soundtrap for non-Mac users)**
- **Kandinsky Piece**
- **Headphones**
- **Projector**

Lesson Sequence:

Entry Activity:

- The teacher will begin by asking students to recall what they have learned about Kandinsky.
- Once students have responded, the teacher will show the students a piece of art painted by Kandinsky.
- The teacher will then inform students that they will be creating their own abstract work in GarageBand that reflects the image they see.

Activity #1:

1. The teacher will provide instruction on how to access the loop database in GarageBand.

2. The students will be instructed to use as many loops as they see fit to reflect the piece of art.
3. As students begin to explore, the teacher should roam around to student workspaces to help with any troubleshooting issues.
 - a. *If the class has not had any Digital Audio Workstation experience, the teacher may provide a quick tutorial on basic functions such as drag and drop, trimming, deleting loops, etc.*
4. As students progress on their work, the teacher should remind them to always reference the image as their inspiration for their music.
5. The teacher should allow ample time for students to create their music. This may take the entire class and the following steps may be followed during the next lesson time if needed.
6. Once students have completed their songs, the teacher should instruct them to export and download their file.
7. The teacher should direct students to find a place to sit and listen to each piece.
8. Before each group or student plays their work, the teacher should ask them to describe their music and how they related it to the Kandinsky art.
 - . If students do not do so on their own, the teacher should prompt students to describe how the art made them feel and why they chose the music they did.
9. Once each group has played their work, the teacher should allow time for any final questions or feelings about the art, music, or Kandinsky.

Closure/Summative Assessment:

1. The teacher will assess student’s understanding of Kandinsky and abstract music by their descriptions and final works in GarageBand.

Lesson and Unit Reflections

As this unit and the subsequent lessons were developed, the goal always was to have students connect art and music through social-emotional learning. In the Shenandoah County Public School district, and the United States as a whole, there has been recent growth in support of the social-emotional wellbeing of students in the school system. The intention of these lessons was to provide students a medium in which they could discuss accessing feelings they had through improvisation, art, and music technology. In this way, these discussions were more open and free as they did not address children individually, but granted them the opportunity to explore emotions in different ways.

Students were able to have a cross-curricular experience with both art and music during this unit. Not only did they learn who Kandinsky was as a musician and artist, but they explored music through emotion rather than technique, literacy, or historical analysis. This learning experience was also supplemented by the use of music technology. They learned the basic layout of Digital Audio Workstations by beginning on Chrome Music Lab in the initial lessons. They were able to progress to the more complex format of GarageBand and did so seamlessly. Prior to this unit, this particular group of fifth grade students did not have any experience with this system. The final products were something that they were proud of and they were eager to share it with their peers.

The main instructional strategy used in this unit was cross-curricular teaching and drawing on their prior knowledge of both music and art. While under the umbrella of social-emotional learning, students also gained practical music technology skills through the use of modeling and hands-on activities. Students were able to successfully demonstrate tasks in Chrome Music Lab and GarageBand after watching me model the correct ways to accomplish what they needed. Because of the open-ended model used in this unit, informal assessments were used to gauge student understanding and success.

Moving forward, I would strongly consider using this unit again and include higher grade levels as well. For older students, I would most likely use MIDI technology and recorded sounds for the music technology portion. I would also consider using a different image by Kandinsky for each group or student in order to allow for different discussions to take place. It was interesting, however, to hear the different ways in which students perceived the same image and how it was reflected in the final products.

This unit provided value to my classroom instruction in many ways that I did not anticipate. I was not expecting to get such impressive final products from my fifth grade students as I did. I believe the reason that this was possible was because of the absence of particular musical rules that are sometimes incorporated into many composition assignments. The only boundary or restriction they were held to for the final product was only to use loops available in GarageBand. This allowed them to have immediate success in using a new software system on such an abstract project. This experience has offered a new perspective in my teaching of composition and improvisation. Many times when I have taught these topics, I have restricted the assignments with compositional rules or boundaries to where students may not have as much creative control as they might desire. While these boundaries are useful on occasion when teaching particular concepts, I discovered that this does not always have to be the goal in compositional projects. Furthermore, I allowed more time than usual for students to come to a resting point in their projects. As referenced in the third lesson, I took the opportunity to extend the final portion of the unit into two days rather than one. This gave students time to create full works and also granted them space to be proud of their work.

Moving forward, I see my instructional approach shifting to less of a teacher-controlled environment and into more creative freedom for the students. If I look back on my teaching philosophy, I see a need for a greater focus on student enjoyment of music, rather than always maintaining focus on the performance product. This redirection of my teaching focus, in my opinion, would be one step closer to the teaching of the whole child.

Chapter 3 - Reflections

For a while, I struggled with the task of taking my classical piano background and applying it to teaching middle school general music. This was not particularly surprising to me because I had no intention of becoming a teacher. My initial plan was to play piano anywhere I could until, one year, a teaching opportunity fell into my lap. As I joyfully took the job, I realized I was in no way equipped to teach students of today. I found out rather quickly that the classical world in which I had spent my entire life did not apply to who and what I was teaching. While classical music has a place in music education, there is greater reach when meeting students where they are at; in life and in their own music. I discovered, especially in my time at Kansas State, that the world in which I had fallen in love with music was a place many students could not always access. When we teach the same classics, year after year, we end up alienating and losing students that could have found their way in music with different material. While this may be a personal opinion, I have found a distinct difference in the engagement and happiness of students when they are provided with the opportunity to have a say in what they study during the fifty-minutes I get with them each day.

A major turning point in this particular view came in my time during the Symposium in Music course at Kansas State during 2019. The focus of the class was on Modern Band through the Little Kids Rock program. This nonprofit organization focuses on musical approximation and instant success with student's first exposure to music education. With this program, I have been able to completely redirect my music teaching and it would be safe to say that I have fun making music with my students every day. We are able to break down songs that they have asked to study in class and each student plays

an integral part in the class band. What has been the most eye-opening experience in this change is that students now ask about classical music and how it relates to the music we are currently playing. I feel as though I have found a balance between the world that I experienced in music and what my students want to have in their own music education. It is a work in progress, but my students and I feel the spark and know that this is something different.

The result of this change in my teaching has also led to more exciting and new experiences in my own school division. In the fall after the Little Kids Rock symposium, I worked closely with the high school band director in my group of schools to implement a curriculum that crosses all grade levels. At the time, the high school had received a grant to create a recording studio in the music wing of the building. This director had been working on creating a Contemporary Music course for grades 9-12. What started as a small idea has now grown into a 6-12 curriculum that focuses on Modern Band instruments such as electric guitar, keyboard, bass, drums, and music technology. We have graciously received iMacs for producing and mixing works from students and are growing our arsenal of professional equipment. We have even created a nonprofit record label called Streetwise Studios Inc., that aims to connect the local community through music and educational opportunities. Through this new label, students have already recorded and completed full albums of original compositions that have been distributed to the public. I never would have imagined that a simple class during my first semester of graduate work would have led to such opportunities for my students.

Another significant aspect in my graduate coursework has been in my Improvisation and Composition in the Elementary Classroom class. If I had been asked to

teach improvisation before I took this course, I would have said that I had no idea how to do any sort of improvisation. This class, combined with the 2019 Symposium in Music, has provided me with a whole new direction in teaching composition and improvisation. I have learned that perfectionism does not have a place in music education. When thinking about my experience in classical piano, it is no wonder why I felt this intense pressure for my students (and myself) to play, read, or write music *perfectly*. What I learned is that there is no such thing as *perfect* music, nor should there be any. The question I began to ask myself as I progressed through the coursework was, “Why do people participate in music?”. Studying the work of Christopher Small (1998), Estelle Jorgensen (1997), and many others helped me understand that being a part of a musical experience is not about playing the right notes or writing a perfect chord progression that follows the rules of the historical musical canon, but rather the human experience derived from something with enough beauty that it can only be expressed through sound, not words. My fear of improvisation did not come from an inability to do so, but from a fear that I would not be perfect. This carried into the thought that my students needed to improvise and write music perfectly as well. This is a disservice to students and music education as a whole. The goal should not be for our students to be perfect, but to be participants in music for the remainder of their lives.

Using the theories I learned from Kodály, Dalcroze, Orff, and Gordon, I have been able to reinvigorate my teaching with a new perspective and outlook. Taking the fundamentals of each of these learning styles and incorporating them into my teaching has helped me to develop a solid foundation for what I want my music classroom to look like. One change that I have seen an immediate difference with is using

Dalcroze methods to incorporate movement into the music. I still have much to learn in the field of music education, but am grateful for a strong foundation in which to start. I feel as though many of the strategies I explored in my graduate studies covered what I may have missed earning a degree in music performance rather than education. This process has been a rewarding and beneficial experience that I hope to reflect on in my teaching for many years to come.

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