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## **Statement of Teaching Philosophy**

My philosophy of teaching has evolved over the course of my experience as an elementary music director with New York City Public Schools, and has become further restructured and solidified as I embark further into my career in higher education. Whether working with four-year-olds or twenty-year olds, I have found that the successful teaching of a pan-human artistic expression such as music relies upon several salient components, including (a) a socially-conscious pedagogy reinforced by a commitment to teaching toward equitable goals, (b) egalitarian and student-directed approaches to musical learning, which includes student empowerment as a necessary matter of preparation for professional life, and (c) a commitment to the shared contributions of research and practice in the development of high-quality teaching. Most importantly, as musician-educators, each of these components must be targeted toward the pursuit of exceptional musicianship.

First, adopting a socially-conscious perspective toward teaching has required me to reflect upon how my sociocultural knowledge, priorities, and assumptions may influence the musical development of my students. Such a pragmatic approach ensures that I become first-and-foremost a facilitator through which students find their own unique musical voices, or “personhood” (Elliott & Silverman, 2014). By reflecting upon the musical choices I make — from the musical cultures I choose to represent, to their function, meaning, and purpose in my students’ lives, I strive for musical experiences which are open-ended, student-directed, and equitable (Allsup, 2016). I believe strongly that music serves as a natural and potent source for social transformation to take place, and any activity in which music is to be taught or learned ought to similarly follow such transformative objectives.

Certainly, an essential component of teaching toward transformative and equitable ends is the need to cultivate a learning environment which places students at the center of their own development. Following in the footsteps of Paulo Freire (1970/2010), I believe that humility is central to this process of egalitarian teaching, wherein the act of teaching becomes a reflexively praxial and dialogical practice. In this manner, teachers humbly relinquish a dominating sense of control and authority, learn to teach *with* students instead of *to* students, and recognize students' prior knowledge as abundantly valuable throughout their personal journeys of musical growth. I seek to embody this approach whenever possible with students, empowering them through what bell hooks (1994) calls an "engaged pedagogy"—whether sitting at eye-level with them during weekly student teaching seminars (e.g., MUSED 403 & MUSED 404), probing them with provocative questions which lead to open-ended conversations rather than self-directed lectures (e.g., MUSED 301 & MUSIC 160), or momentarily removing myself from the role of "teacher" altogether while students peer-teach and peer-critique each other's development as teacher-practitioners (e.g., MUSED 301 & MUSED 440).

Third, high-quality teaching is unequivocally informed by both research and practice. Just as research cannot replicate hands-on experiences that are learned in the "field," student-teachers cannot aim to be highly successful in their professions without enriching that experiential knowledge with research-supported expertise. Whether involving a grasp of the various stages of child development, examining students' aptitude for in-tune and expressive performing, or grappling with theories which confront hegemonic forms of knowledge, research and practice together work in tandem to maximize learners' preparations not only for their professional lives, but as citizens of a participatory and democratic society.

Most importantly, all of these educational pursuits become most meaningful with the simultaneous pursuit of musical competence. In their elementary methods courses, my

students are continually reminded that they are not teaching *the* Kodály, Orff, or Dalcroze method (or whatever approach they may choose to employ), but rather they are teaching music *through* the Kodály, Orff, Dalcroze, or some other method. In their part- and full-time student teaching seminars and observations, my student teachers are further reminded that worthy musical outcomes should be the central goal of any successful lesson.

Accordingly, they have often relayed back to me how engagement, behavior, and musical performances miraculously improved after redirecting their attention away from issues of classroom management and assessment, and toward invigorating music-centered outcomes instead. With these components being central to my preparation of K-12 music educators, I take pride in knowing that my students embark upon their careers with the understanding that they are in a unique position to develop a society of highly competent musicians, as well as to meaningfully enact social change in their classrooms and communities.

#### References

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