

Relationships are the foundation of all learning and learning is the function of life. Relationships to our students, our subject, our community and ourselves must be cultivated and maintained. Teachers are inadequately prepped to do this work. There's too much to learn in a four year degree program to get into the grit of the profession. It takes a career and a half to unpack all the facets of mastery in our subject alone, not to mention how to build a relationship. To understand how to shift to 6th position on a cello, play altissimo on the clarinet, reharmonize 'Have You Met Miss Jones?', execute Schlossberg lip slurs on trumpet, double slap on electric bass, mix and master on Logic Pro... the list is enormous and begets other lists overnight. It's a disorienting mountain of work and yet when boiled down, the bottom line is relationships.

Teachers ought to be students first, on a relentless quest for more knowledge, a deeper grasp of content, all the ways to deliver it and how to progress at the craft of teaching and making music. Additionally, master teachers are anthropologists, demographers and ethnographers. To build a relationship with someone, you have to know them, where and who they come from, where they've been and where they could go. New teachers head into communities unlike their own and attempt to teach as they were taught. It's no wonder, as Diane Ravitch (2010) suggests, that 40-50% of teachers don't last longer than 5 years and less than half make it to retirement (p. 177). Teachers must study their communities and students themselves in order to build relationships and thus teach.

In addition to being a student of where one lives, music teachers must also build a culture within their programs, a microcosm of their greater community. Students need to be an equal part of this process. Our student musicians are our brothers and sisters of the craft. This is tremendously powerful and flips the traditional role of student-teacher on its head. Students being stakeholders goes beyond maintaining a student leadership program. It means that students learn how and why decisions are made and have a voice in the process. Young musicians should learn how to select music, how to analyze a score, how to rehearse, how to publicize a show, setup and run sound, produce and sell merchandise, play to a crowd, negotiate payment (where appropriate), etc. If it exists in our field, it's worth analyzing and passing on to the young musicians around us. Music has always been delivered through a folk process. To be a musician is to be a teacher. We absorb what we can and pass it on, so that it thrives and progresses, or as Estelle Jorgenson (2003) says: "Knowledge of a large body of musical wisdom cannot be left to happenstance but is passed on systematically from one generation of musicians to the next" (p. 31).

In order for students to invest in the process, it has to be relevant. This is a hurdle for traditional music education, which in many communities is chained to symphonic band, concert chorus and string orchestra. While these ensembles are crucial components of a well rounded music curriculum, many programs are missing a broad swath of musical opportunities and thus a broad swath of student population. As Jorgenson (2003) writes, "... music instruction remains very traditional, and its rationale has changed little since the early part of the nineteenth century, when public schools were established." (p. 3). Or as Lucy Green (2002) puts it: "At present the measurement of 'success' in a musician so often seems to be

virtually synonymous with ‘full-time professional’” (p. 17). Our vision has to cast beyond the walls of our band rooms and concert halls and towards a lifetime of joyful music making in all its permutations. Musical literacy, hire-ability, being well versed in genre and variety of ensembles are all crucial components to a real music education, not to mention music as therapy, building community and protest. Kenny Werner (1996) writes “When a kid gets serious, it’s usually not music they studied in school” (p.29). Why not? Imagine if it was!

Diane Ravitch (2010) suggests that compared to a charter or private school, the dilemma of public education is that public schools must accept all (p. 136). This has to be true of music programs all across our country. Every student should be able to find a home within our programs and there must be an abundance of opportunity awaiting them. Students need a community where they can learn how to play the guitar, how to rap, produce, improvise, write lyrics, fiddle, compose, start a cover band and play the trombone in an all state big band. My philosophy of education aims to answer nearly every question with yes and to leave nearly every door wide open. There’s far too much at stake to be exclusive.

While this work is monumental, music makes it a little easier, in many ways teaching itself. Masterful teaching demonstrates a delicate balance between allowing music to work its magic and facilitation. Seldom do I find words to be more efficient than music and yet it’s hard to remain quiet. This alone is a lifetime pursuit.

The primary way we learn about music is through listening. This is the fundamental skill to be taught within the music classroom: how to listen to music for life. In addition to teaching how to listen, we also must also model habits. We must have a grasp on

music throughout history, genres, hits and b-sides. An understanding of how and why the people of the world listen is crucial to passing these habits on to our students.

Teachers have to be first and foremost students, in lifelong pursuit of more knowledge. For eight years, I've been in an 'album of the week' club with a colleague where we alternate picking albums that we dissect throughout each week. This has been significantly influential to my teaching. I also make an effort to learn a new instrument every year alongside my students, so I can maintain a beginners mind while increasing the breadth of my skills.

In closing, I believe the chief aim of education is happiness. Nel Noddings (2003) suggests that there is but one subject, 'life itself in all manifestations' (p. 63). I am not a student of music but a student of life. Music is a vessel. It's a way to teach the broader, loftier concepts of living a good life. These cast beyond subject. Former Chicago Bulls coach, Phil Jackson (1995) is known for his work in this vein: "My primary goal during practice is to get the players to reconnect with the intrinsic joy of the game" (p. 123). Jackson was convinced that "teaching extended far beyond basketball, by instilling the techniques and discipline that would enhance the rest of their lives" (p. x). No wonder he had such a monumental impact on so many of his players (students). Music educators would be wise to share these aims. While much of my philosophy hones in on music education specifically, I believe that all of these principles are much larger than subject, that relationships are the foundation of all learning and that learning is the function of life.

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