

A Personal Philosophy of Music Education

Thomas A. Torrento

As a music teacher, it is my belief that *all* students, regardless of socio-economic status, physical or intellectual ability, should be offered the opportunity to discover and explore their innate potential as musicians, and to increase these natural capacities through formal music instruction. In my opinion, the goal of music education is not only to form an appreciation of the music of others, but also encourage children to shape their own unique musical identity, through academic study and performance opportunities. Music education should be guided by the purpose of crafting independent musicians, capable of performing, evaluating, and creating music.

In my music classrooms, I aim to help students achieve both an aesthetic and academic understanding of music, as well as, practical music skills. As a result, my curriculum focuses on meeting the framework for 21st Century Learning and the National Standards for Music Education, which encompass sequenced learning targets in all aspects of music performance, music literacy and fine arts integration.

While active music making is the primary goal of music education, as children mature, they will also use this base of experience and performance to draw from and move to a focus on music literacy and critical response to music. In my music classroom, the abilities to read, discuss, evaluate and create music become key components in the development of future independent musicians, as students enter into higher level ensembles. With a focus on active music making, student inquiry, and essential questions, I aim to engage the whole child and optimize learning.

It is my belief that all children are capable of musical learning, regardless of their diverse abilities. All students are encouraged to enter into the music creating and learning process, regardless of physical, cognitive and/or behavioral limitations, with the help of adaptations and modifications to instruction, as well as opportunities for students to make choices in how they will show their learning in performance assessments. Likewise my students are encouraged to value the unique talents of each individual and build upon personal talents, through self-reflection and peer coaching.

It is my belief that students will flourish if the teacher not only provides quality repertoire and instruction, but also consistent and clear goals for both behavior and music learning targets. My music students are supported by predictable routines and clearly communicated goals, within an organized learning environment.

Rules and expectations for learning are clearly articulated, revisited often, and represent a mutual contract of respect, responsibility, safety, honesty, and caring, in the effort to maximize learning and encourage participation. Students not only know and agree upon the goals of their learning community, but in my classroom they understand the impact of their poor choices on their grades and the health of the whole. Students who do not use good judgment in their actions are always dealt with respectfully and promptly, using predetermined and appropriate consequences.

Also, my role as a music educator not only includes aspects of the student teacher relationship, but also frequent communication between other teachers, administrators, parents, and school professionals. I believe that the education of every child is a team effort that begins first with collaboration and communication. Whether this communication takes the form of parent to teacher phone calls, consultations with school psychologists and SPED instructors or planning sessions with other teachers, students in my classroom can expect that I will use all resources in the school community to increase my effectiveness as their teacher.

In summary, my charge as a music educator is to bring all of my students into a life-long love of music, while solidifying that appreciation with practical skills and true musicianship. I aim to optimize the musical talents of my students and help create the next generation of independent and creative musicians. As both a musician and a teacher, I aim to share my own love of children and music while helping create a musically literate society of music consumers, performers and composers.