

CHAPTER 2

The Music Teacher

Teachers know their lives in terms of stories. They live stories, tell stories of those lives, retell stories with changed possibilities, and relive the changed stories. We mean more than teachers telling stories of specific children and events. We mean that their way of being in the classroom is storied: As teachers they are characters in their own stories of teaching, which they author. (Clandinin and Connelly, 1995, 12)

We all have a story—many stories, actually. Stories of childhood and adolescence, stories of education and adulthood, or stories of family and friends—all of these stories, the good and the bad, influence who we are and how we approach teaching music to adolescents. Through awareness of the impact our stories have on us, we are better equipped to understand our beliefs and approaches to teaching music. For example, when I was a junior in college I did not have a strong sense of how to infuse my personality into my teacher persona. I distinctly remember sitting in the undergraduate music library, deep in personal crisis, as I realized that as a teacher *I had to be a grown-up*. And I completely freaked out because I did not know how I was going to do that and also be myself. I've always enjoyed being a bit quirky and silly; I like to make people laugh. But I wanted to teach high school, and all of the high school teachers I knew were refined, poised, elegant, and seemingly more mature than I thought I would ever be. Following graduation, I reluctantly began teaching young adolescents. However, the more time I spent with middle school students, the more I found that I could really, truly be myself—my quirky, goofy self—and I loved it.

One result of this personal experience was the solidification of my philosophy of teaching music to adolescents: I wanted my students to

depart from our time together with a greater understanding of *themselves* through the study of music—their likes and dislikes, awareness of musicianship, tastes as consumers of music, and enhanced understanding of their place in the world. For me, music largely became a vehicle for unapologetic self-discovery and affirmation. Today as a music teacher educator, the core of my music education philosophy still holds true: I do not want my college students to be carbon copies of me or imitations of their high school music teacher. I want my students to figure out who *they* are as music educators and develop confidence to know that, fundamentally, the ways that they teach can work best for them regardless of how anyone else is doing it.

It is valuable for each of us to consider who we are and *why* we teach music to adolescents the ways that we do—whether we call this a philosophy, a belief system, or viewpoint—and realize how our personal and professional stories have influenced our approaches to the music classroom. Paulo Freire wrote in his book *Teachers as Cultural Workers: Letters to Those Who Dare to Teach* about teaching as an act of courage, commitment, and daring. I find the follow passage from this book to be invigorating and validating:

The task of the teacher, who is also a learner, is both joyful and rigorous. It demands seriousness and scientific, physical, emotional, and affective preparation. It is a task that requires that those who commit themselves to teaching develop a certain love not only of others but also of the very process implied in teaching. It is impossible to teach without the courage to love, without the courage to try a thousand times before giving up. In short, it is impossible to teach without a forged, invented, and well-thought-out capacity to love. Here is how we make the link to the subtitle, *Letters to Those Who Dare Teach*. We must dare, in the full sense of the word, to speak of love without the fear of being called ridiculous, mawkish, or unscientific, if not antiscientific. We must dare in order to say scientifically, and not as mere blah-blah-blah, that we study, we learn, we teach, we know with our entire body. We do all of these things with feeling, with emotion, with wishes, with fear, with doubts, with passion, and also with critical reasoning. However, we never study, learn, teach, or know with the last only. We must dare so as never to dichotomize cognition and emotion. We must dare so that we can continue to teach for a long time under conditions that we know well: low salaries, lack of respect, and the ever-present risk of becoming prey to cynicism. We must dare to learn how to dare in order to say no to the bureaucratization of the mind to which we are exposed every day. We must dare so that we can continue to do so even when it is so much more materially advantageous to stop daring. (Freire, 2005, 5–6)

Therefore, consider your own storied life and music teaching career (thus far) for a moment. What has caused you to dare to be a music teacher? To be a teacher of adolescents? How did you arrive to where you are today? What stories have influenced your current path? Who has played a role in the various stories of your life? How have your stories and experiences influenced you and your approach to your music classroom? What do you believe about teaching adolescent musicians specifically, and why?

TEACHING YOUNG ADOLESCENTS

Curious as to how the contributing music educators came to teach middle school music, I asked them to share their stories; some of these were simple and some complex. However, regardless of where the teachers were in their careers at the time of our interviews, their individual stories aligned with each other through their great enjoyment of teaching adolescent musicians. I am honored to share some of them here.

To some degree reminding me of Goldilocks, Michelle (choir) felt that she did not quite “fit” with elementary students or with high school students. However, her fit with middle school music students was *just right*—especially as she found that they had the same sense of humor:

MICHELLE: I want to be in that middle ground where you really start to inspire them and see that spark. You know, I started choir in sixth grade and it was *my* spark. I want to be that for these kids and start them on their journey. And then I started working with middle school singers and I realized that my maturity level was that of a middle schooler. So when I said “bus duty” and started laughing and the kids told me to grow up, I knew that I was teaching the right grade level.

In college, Tavia (band) had always intended to be a performer. She has two brass performance degrees and was all set to earn a third and teach college when injuries left her unable to play. While recovering, she decided that she wanted to teach high school band, so she completed her music education certification. During student teaching, she said, “I realized that middle school is where it’s *at*. The kids are just so excited and they have this energy that high schoolers don’t.”

Also while student teaching, both Jason (band) and Gretchen (strings) realized how much they enjoyed middle school students. Jason was quite inspired by the work of his cooperating teacher: “I was amazed by the results

and growth and the way that you can change kids so much at such an early age," he said. So he decided that middle school was where he wanted to stay. Gretchen had never intended to work in schools at all, but rather, planned to establish herself as a private string teacher. However, in the first five or six weeks of student teaching, she said, "I fell in love with middle school," and she has been teaching young adolescents since.

For James, his plan all along had been to be "God's gift to the high school world." He interviewed several times for high school choral positions, but was ultimately hired as an elementary music teacher. While teaching elementary music, James attended a middle school choral performance in his district. "I was blown away. I didn't know middle schoolers could make that kind of sound. I didn't know that they were capable of that kind of music making. And, I thought, 'Wow. I can do this.'" James eventually accepted a middle school choral position and over time has realized that the responsibilities associated with a high school choral position are no longer a good fit for him.

JAMES: There were times when I wanted to go out and do high school choral stuff. But, frankly, I don't want the load. I don't want to do the musicals and everything else that comes with a high school job. So middle school is a good balance for me. I can do choral things that are pretty demanding. But at the same time, I don't have to be there day and night. I can still go hunting and fishing and play tennis and . . . all that other stuff.

When in college, David (choir and guitar) was a jazz guitar major. After seeing a performance of the American Boychoir School on tour, he "heard the call to be a music educator." The twist: not only did he now want to teach music, he wanted to teach *choral music*—in spite of having had no choral experience in high school or college. "That was kind of a big revelation for me at the time, because I was a guitar major," David said. After much hard work, most of David's renowned teaching career has involved teaching middle-level music, largely choir and guitar.

Some of these music educators had absolutely no interest in teaching middle school when they applied for positions, but ultimately ended up with the age group and then never left. When Kate (general) graduated from college, she promised herself that she would never teach middle school. In spite of this, following an interview for her current school district, she was assigned to teach at the middle school because she fit so well with the team of people already in place there. "So it was kind of an accident that I started teaching middle school," she said. Bethany (general) also

described her landing a middle school position as accidental. Upon graduation from college, she applied to teach in a school district in Philadelphia.

BETHANY: They give you a list of available positions and you just pick one. They had a big map up in the room so you could look where the jobs were and that's it. I said to some guy, "I want to be close to where I live." He looked at the map and said, "This is the best school close to your house, even though it's still pretty far." And I was like, "Okay!" So I picked it! (*chuckling*)

Deb (choir) was originally hired as an elementary music teacher, and her school district later added middle school choir to her teaching load.

DEB: I was *really* scared because then I had to do sixth, seventh, and eighth grade choir. I mean, I'm musical, but I had no experience working with a mixed voice choir. Zero. It was really scary that first year.

BRIDGET: So how do you feel about the middle school kids now?

DEB: If I could write my job description right now I would teach at both middle schools, all choirs. Period.

Only Jay (choir and composition) specifically sought out a middle school teaching position "to get to know that level better." After five years of teaching both middle and high school students in various capacities, he realized that "middle school was a great level for me. I love the level. I love my job. I have been recruited by high schools, but I hope to retire from my middle school."

ROLES OF THE MUSIC TEACHER

We assume many roles as music educators, especially as our work with specific students can span across three or four consecutive school years. Consider all of the hats that you wear: What are the implications of each in your daily work? Which are the most rewarding? Which consume the most mental energy? Which use the most emotional energy? How do your various roles influence your students? How do your various roles influence or impact your own quality of life inside and outside of school?

Teaching can be very fulfilling, but also very exhausting. By occasionally taking stock of how your energy is "spent" in your days, you can keep a better tab on whether or not you are truly happy with your various roles.

And if not, what can be done to remedy the situation? Too many good teachers burn out as a result of unnecessarily spreading themselves across too many roles; they are exhausted physically, mentally, and emotionally from trying to meet the needs of many *other* people. The first person who truly deserves your energy is *you* (and you are no good to anyone if you are too frazzled), so be wary of playing every role for everyone else.

The next section of this chapter addresses some of the multifaceted roles commonly played by music teachers of adolescents. There are many, many roles that could be discussed in this book, but I have chosen to focus on the roles of music educator (including emphasis on enriching perspective on ourselves as music educators and providing meaningful musical opportunities), leadership, nurturer, cautious counselor, the role of teacher and not friend, and resourceful provider.

Music Educator Role

The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions.
(Ralph Waldo Emerson [or Oliver Wendell Holmes])

Why teach adolescents about music? There is no quick and easy answer to this question, especially as we all have differences of opinion on why we teach music to adolescent students. However, let's begin with the fact that adolescents often do not have the words to fully express themselves. But, boy! Give them the opportunity to play a piece of music that demonstrates how they feel about something, or allow them to share the text of a song that expresses what they are experiencing, and their ability to nail it on the head can be just remarkable. Still, adolescents don't know what they don't know, and their understanding of music is limited by what they have learned thus far in their lives. By teaching students about music through performance, listening, conversation, analysis, dissection, demonstration, composition, and research, while also encouraging critical thinking, we provide them with ways to better understand why they feel the way they do and to more clearly communicate with others. Let's consider the intersection of opera and the adolescent—in my experience, not the most positive pairing, initially.

"I hate opera." Do you really hate opera, or do you not understand opera? There's a difference. "I don't like opera because it's slow." Not all opera is slow . . . let's take a closer look at a few things. . . . You say that you don't like opera because of the tempo of the music. Does that mean that you do not like any slow music? "No. Opera is boring sounding. Not just because it's slow, I guess." What do you prefer

when you are listening to music? "I like things to have a beat." So, maybe you are not moved by opera because there is no hard beat—does that sound more accurate? "Yeah, I guess."

From here you can take the conversation in a myriad of directions. For example, this student could learn about the intricate storytelling of musicals such as *Rent* or *In the Heights*, which happen to feature a strong beat throughout many of the songs and also include several slow songs. Ask the student about personal reactions to the use of beat in these contexts and why they feel the way they do. What are reactions to the slower songs and why? As *Rent* is a retelling of the story of the famous opera *La Boheme*, the student could compare and contrast storylines, settings, musical elements, use of dance, songs, performance practices, messages, and the histories of the two shows. Have the student consider the emotions that the music from both genres evokes for them. What specific musical elements elicit various emotions for the student and why? From here, discuss the student's preferences regarding stylistic or artistic facets of musical theater vs. opera. And so forth. . . . While it is important that adolescent music students have opportunities to critically and objectively examine music, they also need to subjectively ponder its significance and contribution to the art world (and larger world) as well as how it impacts them, personally.

Then comes a really exciting part! As students gain the skills to dissect what they hear and perform and make distinctions about the various elements of their experiences, they are much more prepared to go forth and replicate musical experiences that they enjoy; intelligently discuss musical experiences that they have had; connect with other people in entirely new ways; and/or make more informed decisions about their involvement with or consumption of music. Ultimately, when our students are more aware of what evokes emotion for them in music and have a better understanding about their general musical likes and dislikes, they are more equipped to examine other experiences in their lives and figure out ways to express themselves in different capacities, as well as replicate or seek out specific musical experiences.¹

As discussed in chapter one, we need to help our adolescent students move forward from our music lessons toward understanding how musical experiences are relevant to them in their own lives. So I want adolescent music students to leave a discussion about opera, or any musical idea, understanding more about the art form as well as why they feel the way they do. I want them to hear the opinions of their peers and feel validated and confident about their own feelings and reactions to the music, whether they completely align with the opinions of their peers or differ by 180

degrees. No more blanket statements such as, "I hate opera." I want my students to make informed decisions about their involvement with opera from our time together and move forward. Perhaps they will go forth excited about this art form! Maybe after our discussion they will explore other rock musical options, such as *Tommy* or *Hair* or *Memphis* as well as operas such as *Madame Butterfly* or *The Merry Widow*. Or maybe they will better understand some pop-culture reference five years down the road based on our conversation and, at that point in their life, a renewed interest in opera or musical theater will be ignited. Perhaps they will even understand their disinterest in stories that are sung and make an informed decision to spend time enjoying other activities or art forms. Any of these scenarios is possible, especially if our adolescent music students understand the motivations behind their musical decisions.

The quote at the beginning of this section—"The mind, once stretched by a new idea, never returns to its original dimensions"—is worth repeating again here. No matter what adolescent music students end up doing with the musical experiences and understandings we provide, whether in general music classes, ensemble rehearsals, or performance clinics and festivals, we should attempt to change the shape of their minds in some way. As music educators, it is part of our job to provide adolescent musicians with tools they can use as they go forth and make informed decisions about their interactions with music, ultimately ending up with a deeper understanding of themselves in the process.

Enriching Perspective on Ourselves as Music Educators

Learning without reflection is a waste. Reflection without learning is dangerous.
(Confucius)

Our role as music educator does not mean that we are exempt from the sorts of self-exploration that we ask from our students. In fact, efforts that provide opportunities for us to enrich and deepen our perspective about who we are as people, musicians, and music educators will only help us in our work with adolescent musicians. It is easy to put off reflection and contemplation about our own musical experiences because, let's face it, being a music educator is extremely busy work. However, *any* efforts to enrich perspectives on ourselves and our work with adolescent music students can pay off in huge dividends.

What follows are four activities of varying involvement to get you started on your contemplation journey. I also posed a number of questions in the beginning section of this chapter (on the influence of stories on our

lives and work) and invite you to reflect upon these as well. Moving forward from this book, you are encouraged to seek out additional tasks, questions, and readings to help you continue to better understand who you are (or who you strive to be) as a musician and teacher—no matter how long you have been part of the music education profession—and use that enriched perspective to enhance and improve upon your teaching of adolescent music students. Be open to new curiosities and questions that arise for you during this process, and feel free to refer to the Confucius quote above for inspiration on your journey.

Activity #1: In my Music in Adolescence class at the University of Illinois, music education majors learn about teaching general music classes in middle and high school. At the beginning of the semester, we take some time to unpack our own adolescent experiences and complete a project called “Adolescent Me & Music,” which is similar to the “Identity Music Project” discussed in chapter one. Students choose 4-6 one-minute snippets of songs that were influential to them during middle and/or high school and consider how each song affected, influenced, or supported them as a developing adolescent. In addition, during presentations of these snippets for the class, each person must share insight on how specific songs or circumstances surrounding the songs have impacted them as a future music educator. It is quite remarkable to hear the varied stories from my students, as well as their realizations of how important music was for them during this pivotal time of self-discovery in their lives, influencing who they are in present day.

If you embarked on such a project about your own adolescent years, what sorts of pieces would you choose to share and why? How have your own adolescent experiences and interactions with music informed your work today as a middle-level music educator? Consider the implications of what you have realized about yourself on your future work as a music teacher of adolescents—how will your teaching beliefs and practices be tweaked or reinforced? To further enrich the experience, complete this project this with a friend or two and share/compare. What did you find? How were your adolescent experiences similar and/or different? What are the implications of these similarities and/or differences within your different schools or the broader music education profession?

Activity #2: Also as part of my Music in Adolescence class, my college music students are required to keep a listening journal following criteria put forth by music education professor Maud Hickey in her book *Music Outside the Lines: Ideas for Composing in K-12 Music Classrooms*. The lesson instructions are as follows:

Use this journal to keep a list of all of the music you hear during the day. Each day write the titles (or description if you do not know the title) of music you

hear during the day, and the place you are when you hear it. Choose one piece that is your favorite and one that is your least favorite from the week to describe in more detail. Use the format below for your descriptions:

Favorite (least favorite) music title:

Composer/artist:

Describe the musical elements:

What musical elements make this piece your favorite (least favorite)?

What personal elements make this piece your favorite (least favorite)?

Share these through class discussions. (Hickey 2012, 59)

Following this activity, my college students are always surprised at what they learn about their musical preferences and responses to the music they have heard, as well as about themselves after having studied music for several years. Four of them granted me permission to share excerpts of their reflections here, which provide evidence of their thinking processes and moments of self-discovery through this activity.

OVERALL THOUGHTS: I started to think a lot about my listening habits in high school. I realized that a lot of other people listen to more music than I do, and that I seemed to be lacking in a number of “must-know” songs. This project reinforced my realization that I prefer to focus on one artist or album at a time and take a long time to really pick apart what they have created. I love Bon Iver’s album, and have had it for several months, but I have yet to come to solid conclusions on what many of the lyrics mean. Without the liner notes, I still have a hard time picking out lyrics. I do know that I seek out atmosphere and layers in the music I listen to, and I tend to like either really mellow music or very intense music. For whatever reason, the in-between can only be filled by something that really interests me in its construction. I would love to use this project to get to know some of my future students’ listening habits and perhaps discuss them in my future classrooms. (Syrus White, junior music education major)

LEAST FAVORITE: “Back in Black”—ACDC

Among the list of musical works listed above this one stands out as distinctly different from the other selections, and that is because this is one of my sister’s recordings she played for me on the drive back to the University of Illinois. She and I have opposite musical tastes, and based on other selections she has played for me I decided I wasn’t going to like this one before she even played it,

strictly because it was "her" music. Personally I also just don't like anything too harsh, and I can't stand anything that's not melodic in any sense, and to me the vocals just sounded non-musical.

Musically I didn't like how bare the accompaniment was; though the guitar part is extremely famous I thought that overall the entire recording (though loud and brash) was fairly empty. The tone of the guitar and the vocals were both extremely rough and I thought that both sounded like they were competing for the attention of the song; neither seemed to be the focus. I also thought that the song remained fairly stagnant. There was no musical growth besides the guitar solo, and I felt musically bored throughout the entire recording (so we switched back over to my music while my sister put in her headphones). (Megan Warren, junior music education major)

FAVORITE: "If I Didn't Believe in You"

COMPOSER/ARTIST: From the musical *The Last Five Years* by Jason Robert Brown

What musical elements made this piece your favorite?

The singer was incredibly expressive in his performance of the song, "If I Didn't Believe in You." The piece tells a story about a married couple who is on the verge of breaking up. If I were to read the text without listening to the music, I would still be moved because the text tells a beautiful, but sad, story. The music enhances the text and provides its own expressive qualities.

In the beginning of the song, the husband (and soloist) is describing a prolonged fight that the couple is experiencing. The chorus however, is much more hopeful as the husband explains all of the reasons that he believes in his wife. Personally, I feel that even the way the title is worded is important to the story. The title is "If I Didn't Believe in You" and the husband lists several things he would do if he did not believe in his wife. Throughout the piece, the husband is defending himself, not convincing his wife that he believes in her. His tone is condescending and competitive. The couple does not end up together in the end, which is why the title of the piece is not "I Believe in You." The husband never explicitly states that he believes in his wife.

The piano reflects the stagnant nature of the piece. The husband is trying to convince his wife that they should be together, but his attempts are futile. The piano mirrors this lack of motion through a motive that occurs several times throughout the song. This motive begins with the tonic in the low bass and high soprano

on half notes, then the moving line begins on the mediant in the middle range, but it ultimately ends back where it started on the mediant. The stagnant notes create a frame, while the suspension on the mediant and subdominant create a sense of hopeful longing that is also expressed in the text.

The range of the piece is higher at the climax of the song and the dynamic becomes louder. Both of these elements heighten the emotions being expressed. The climax is abruptly ended when the soloist sings a powerful line, followed by a strong and meaningful silence. The song ends with one final repetition of the motive. (Katie Bruton, junior music education major)

FAVORITE ALERT!: Solas Ane—Samuel Hazo

HOLY MOLY YESYESYESYESYES I listened to this like fifteen times after I was done observing at Glenbard East High School. Gorgeous band piece based on an Irish melody—name means “Yesterday’s Joy” and is perfectly evoked by the different brass/woodwind sections weaving in and out. Woodwinds have solo-ish, exposed, delicate sections, and the band played them so well in-tune and emotionally and YES.

I probably love this piece because it’s incredibly lyrical, captures emotion in the perfect way that words often can’t, and shows that a) brass instruments sound AWESOME when dialed back dynamically and given sweeping lines and b) woodwind feature sections played well are fantastically gorgeous. (Meghan Jain, junior music education major)

You are strongly encouraged to explore Hickey’s book, try this activity, and take a good look at your own listening responses. What do you discover about your own reactions to different kinds of music and, most importantly, *why* do you feel the way that you do? What musically moves you? For me, through such activities I’ve gained a better understanding of why I enjoy music from Jack White, Alabama Shakes, Foo Fighters or Dave Matthews so much—it’s their juxtaposition of harsh sections with beautiful melodic or harmonic moments that engage and intrigue me. From such personal contemplations, I’ve come to realize how much I enjoy music that is more raw, unpolished, and soulful. I realize that I am much more appreciative of musicians who mix contrasting elements in their music and who build tension and then resolve it in their music.

Going even further down the rabbit hole, I have also gained a better understanding of how my musical preferences influence the choral music that I choose when working with middle and high school singers, as well

as the musical elements I choose to highlight for them during our time together. With this understanding, I now feel more grounded in my choices of choral repertoire because I better understand *why* I am drawn to different pieces of music (and why I shy away from others). As a result, I am better at balancing the different kinds of music that I choose for singers and am much more thoughtful and deliberate in my selections.

Ultimately, by more deeply understanding the elements of music that evoke emotion for me, I have become a more informed musician, consumer of music, choral teacher, and conductor, and have developed my ability to discuss, appreciate, experience, enjoy, and share all music on entirely new levels—even after being an experienced musician for many, many years.

Activity #3: Robert Brooks invites participants in his workshops to engage in a brief exercise to deepen their understanding of themselves as teachers. He first asks those in attendance to describe ideal and less-than-ideal teachers, and then poses the following scenario:

Imagine for a moment that I ask all of you to leave and I call in the students you teach. I then request your students to use one or more words to describe you. What words would you hope they use? What words do you think they would use? What images do you think are important to project as a teacher? If we could see the world through your students' eyes, what images would be cast?" (Brooks, 1991, 19)

Consideration of your teaching practice through the imagined perspective of your students can be very insightful, especially if done in a frank and honest manner. How would you respond to Brooks's questions? Are you pleased with your responses? If no, what changes would you make in your classroom with regard to teaching practice, policies, and/or interactions with others? If yes, what would you keep the same and why?

Activity #4: Following guidelines from the This I Believe organization, you are encouraged to create a statement with the intent of addressing the theme of "This I Believe: Teaching Adolescents Music." The following guidelines come from the original invitation to complete a "This I Believe" statement on a topic of their choice (<http://thisibelieve.org/history/invitation/>):

- This invites you to make a very great contribution: nothing less than a statement of your personal beliefs, of the values which rule your thought and action. Your essay should be about three minutes in length when read loud, written in a style as you yourself speak, and total no more than 500 words.

- We know this is a tough job. What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. We ask you to write in your own words and then record in your own voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this for you to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down they may become of untold meaning to others.
- We would like you to tell not only what you believe, but how you reached your beliefs, and if they have grown, what made them grow. This necessarily must be highly personal. That is what we anticipate and want.
- It may help you in formulating your credo if we tell you also what we do not want. We do not want a sermon, religious or lay; we do not want editorializing or sectarianism or “finger-pointing.” We do not even want your views on the American way of life, or democracy or free enterprise. These are important but for another occasion. We want to know what you live by. And we want it in terms of “I,” not the editorial “We.”
- We do ask you to confine yourself to affirmatives: This means refraining from saying what you do not believe. Your beliefs may well have grown in clarity to you by a process of elimination and rejection, but for our part, we must avoid negative statements lest we become a medium for the criticism of beliefs, which is the very opposite of our purpose.

My music education students complete a “This I Believe: Teaching Adolescents Music” statement at the end of my Music in Adolescence class. It has proven to be a valuable experience in helping them solidify their opinions and philosophies about music in the lives of adolescent students in a positive and proactive way. Although the actual details of this task are few, the resulting thinking is quite deep; the resulting project is very concise; and the ramifications of such self-exploration are far-reaching.

Through activities such as the four outlined above (and there are many others out there just as valuable), we will challenge, enrich, and validate our thinking and beliefs about teaching adolescents while solidifying our philosophies of music education and deepening our own future experiences with music and teaching. In addition, they provide excellent opportunities for potential collaboration and connection with other music educators that often come too far and few between.

Providing Meaningful Musical Opportunities

Part of our role as a music educator is to be a conduit between adolescent music students and meaningful music experiences—both inside and

outside of our own classrooms. A *big* part of our job is getting our music students fired up about the many possibilities of musical involvement and recognizing the meaningfulness of their musical experiences. In Mike's (band) own words:

MIKE: I almost feel an obligation to give them as many opportunities as possible, whether it be something as simple as picking quality music or taking them to high-quality festivals or on trips. You know, we want everything musical to be memorable so they're hooked! So they love music! And that will translate to them playing in high school and college. And even if they don't play past high school, they'll still say, "Oh man! I still love this jazz song" or "I still love this trumpeter that I listened to on a CD when I was in seventh grade and it's still something that I enjoy."

In my first years of teaching middle school choir, I felt pressured to teach students in ways that would prepare them for their time in high school choir. I eventually came to the realization that whatever happened beyond my classroom was really out of my control, so why was I spending so much energy in that direction? While students were with *me*, I should give them everything I could to send them forth as intelligent consumers of music and thoughtful world citizens, regardless of whether they ever took another music class. This shift in my energies resulted in my being much less worried about the unknown musical future of my students and increased my enjoyment of work in the classroom. Both Gretchen (strings) and Andrew (strings) shared similar sentiments.

GRETCHEN: I see myself as introducing music to students and getting them excited about music. I don't think we should be trying to convince kids at age ten or eleven that they need to be a professional musician. I think that they need an opportunity to experience music and experience *different* kinds of music, so I try really hard to teach all forms of music. I do baroque teaching, I do classical teaching, I do fiddle music, I do jazz music, I do pop music—I feel like they need to be introduced to all of these. When you foster that love for music, it becomes easier to get them to try something else that they wouldn't try originally. The whole goal that I have for being a teacher is to help them become what I call "functional musicians" (that's just a term that I've made up over the years). A functional musician to me is somebody that can appreciate music later in life. They can go to a concert or be a patron of the

arts in some form, or they can go jam with their friends and play whatever instrument they choose. Or they might just hear a song on the radio or hear a song on the Internet, look up the music to it and teach it to themselves. I want to give them enough skills so they can go further in whatever route they choose.

ANDREW: Music is very much the thing that can give students a sense of accomplishment, awareness, eloquence and maturity. I would say most of these kids might not grow up to be professional musicians, so it's my job to help them find a voice and develop a sense of appropriate interaction, self-expression, and positive influence on the world around them.

Our role as "music educator" is really quite special in that we are not just developing musical skills, we are making connections for adolescent students across the board—psychologically, emotionally, physiologically, socially—through all of the musical experiences that we provide. We accomplish this through the topics we choose, including the repertoire we select, the artists we feature, and so forth, as well as by honoring each adolescent's unique relationship with music. "I don't think the subject matters too much as long as connections can be made to the emotions, the historical context, the musical style, and such" (Jay, choir and composition). To illustrate how making such connections for adolescent music students might look in real time, let's consider musical experiences facilitated by David (choir and guitar) and Robyn (strings).

As part of his choral program, David regularly provides large- and small-group opportunities for his adolescent singers to musically model for each other, with the goals of developing musical skills as well as a sense of self-concept. "I feel like a lot of what I try to do is to build efficacy in students through mastery experiences and a classroom environment in which people can sing for each other and perform for each other." Individuality is greatly honored and, through performances for each other, students "become aware of what another person is doing; someone who has a similar age and similar abilities to them."

DAVID: I leave some time every week on Friday for this, even if it's just the last fifteen or twenty minutes at the end of the day. They can come up and sing anything they want, even a pop song (as long as it's school-appropriate). *Anything* that they are feeling because, you know, these students—and adolescents, in general—most of them have a very rich musical life outside of school. In fact, some

students' in-school musical lives are really quite small compared to their out-of-school musical lives. So one of the best things I can do is to build bridges and lure out the distinctions between those two worlds. I feel like these activities help get rid of those inhibitions to not sing for each other, but it also helps them to see that I'm interested in their out-of-school musical lives. I also think that it helps them to see the relevance of musical values that I'm trying to impart to them, so that they don't just see music so compartmentalized to "in-school music" and "out-of-school music."

As David is very thoughtful about providing opportunities for his students to connect vocal music experiences and self-concept development, Robyn is very thoughtful about immersion experiences she arranges for her string students. She very much wants them to experience orchestra in a multitude of ways. As an example, she arranged for Mark Wood, the lead violinist of the Trans-Siberian Orchestra, to conduct a district-wide festival with sixth, seventh, and eighth grade orchestra students. Her words are much more compelling than my paraphrasing, so I will let Robyn speak about this experience:

ROBYN: And for two days we worked on just this rock and roll music—"Born to Be Wild," "A String Thing," "We Will Rock You." We used electric music instruments at our school and the kids had the opportunity to *rock out*. "Oh my gosh, this can exist! We don't have to play the '1812 Overture' every single year. We can actually learn to rock!" And it was a huge eye-opening experience for a lot of those kids, especially for the ones who may be on the verge of dropping because they have this preconceived notion that orchestra music only equals classical music. Now we're throwing this at them and it was just mind-blowing.

It is really important to start them young and make impressions like this on them. I went to concerts as a kid and that memory sticks with me. Or bringing in people like Mark Wood or Randy Sabien, an incredible jazz violinist—when I was a student teacher, he did workshops with our middle school kids and taught them another way to explore on their string instruments. Why not, within music, show students what else is out there? For example, a school near mine has an all-Baroque ensemble with all Baroque instruments. If that appeals to you, you can go that route; or if you take an electronic music class, you can go that route. So at the middle school level, I think it's our responsibility to introduce all of these things to our students and let them see what is possible.

Consider your own music classroom, either the one in which you currently work or the one you envision for your future. In what sorts of varied ways do you (or could you) encourage your students' musical involvement, both within and outside of your music program? How are students' musical endeavors overtly discussed or celebrated in your classroom? In what ways are students encouraged to recognize the meaningfulness of their musical experiences (both in-school and out-of-school experiences)? Do you share stories with your students about your own meaningful music experiences beyond your classroom?

As we move forward to consider other roles we play as music educators, I would like to leave the present discussion with a very poignant quote from Jay (choir and composition):

JAY: At this level, making music is unlike many other curricular and noncurricular activities in that it is not a competition. It is not a race to the top. It is not an every-man-for-himself scenario against a standardized test where it doesn't matter if the student next to you fails, as long as you pass, it's okay. This is a unique chance to work together, feel together, emote together, create together, and more. They will remember those feelings of brotherhood and synchronicity and hopefully want to come back to it.

Leadership Role

In 1929, American philosopher and renowned educational reformer John Dewey described the history of school programs as a swinging pendulum. At one end of the pendulum swing was the school setting of authoritarianism, strict regulation, and rules. At the opposite end of the pendulum swing was the nonstructured school setting designed to allow students to develop from within. Dewey openly criticized educational systems that switched between extreme educational settings way back in 1929. Yet still today the pendulum often gets "stuck" at one end of the swing, where the approach is overdone, rather than staying in constant motion to maintain a balance of ideas. Case in point: the current extreme focus on standardized testing in schools.

However, in more recent years, a shift in the music education profession has encouraged more student-centered, democratic music classrooms (figure 2.1) and a move away from "traditional" music classrooms of dictatorship or authoritarianism (figure 2.2).

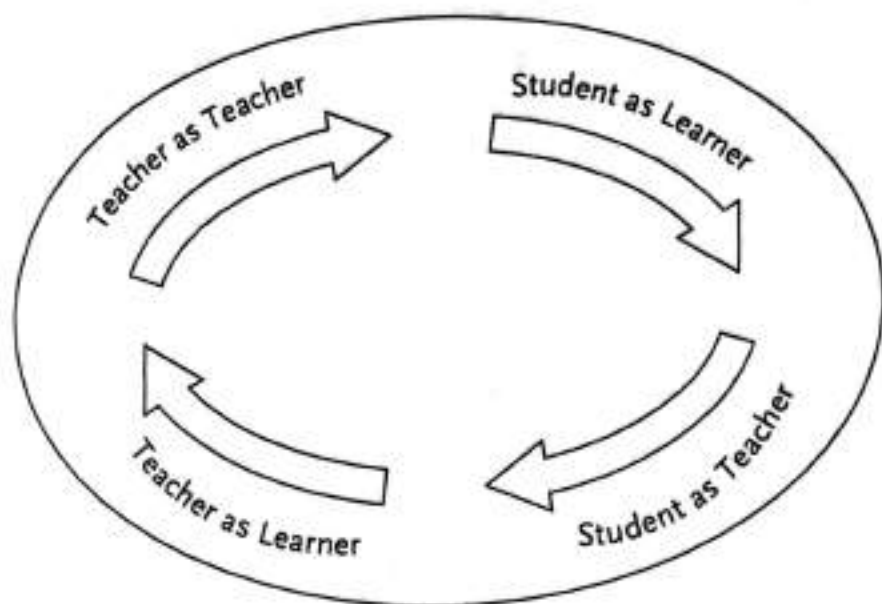


Figure 2.1 Student-centered, democratic music classrooms.

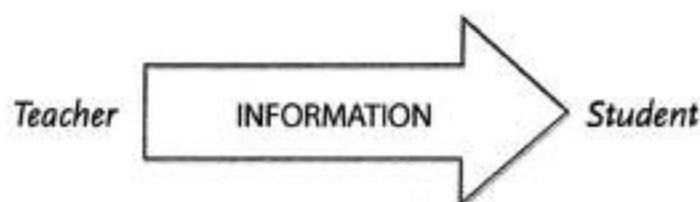


Figure 2.2 "Traditional" music classrooms of dictatorship or authoritarianism.

Goals of a more student-centered, democratic music class are to musically, intellectually, and emotionally empower students and raise awareness of the impact students can have on others. According to music education professor Paul Woodford, educating music students about (and towards) democratic goals will only benefit society.

Above all, democracy depends on the existence of good faith and generosity of spirit, of character and love for one's fellow men and women. These kinds of virtues are the glue that can bind us together as a society, for they motivate conversation and the forging of relationships leading to a sense of community. (Woodford 2005, 84)

Along the same lines, in her article "Teaching Music as Democratic Practice," music education professor Lisa DeLorenzo stressed the importance of music learning environments that not only adhered to musical standards, but also provided opportunities for students to problem solve, practice fairness, and gain knowledge of social justice through the arts that would impact and improve their musical experiences.

Bringing these ideas into the realm of our current and future work in adolescent music education, consider the following: What is the current environment of your music classroom versus your ideal vision for your music classroom? In what ways are more student-centered, democratic principles—such as musically, intellectually, and emotionally empowering students and raising awareness of the impact students can have on others—involved in the environment of your music classroom? And lastly, how do you identify yourself with your students? As a *teacher*? *Conductor*? *Director*? *Conductor/Teacher*? Specific words such as these can be linked to different philosophies of working with adolescent music students and manifest in a variety of ways in the classroom, some more student-centered than others. Let's take a closer look at official definitions of the first three words (courtesy of www.merriam-webster.com):

TEACHER: a person or thing that teaches something; *especially*: a person whose job is to teach students about certain subjects.

CONDUCTOR: a person who stands in front of people while they sing or play musical instruments and directs their performance.

DIRECTOR: a person who supervises the production of a show (as for stage or screen) usually with responsibility for action, lighting, music, and rehearsals.

What are the implications of these definitions for our work in the adolescent music classroom? Clearly there are differences in definitions for all three words, especially with regard to a teacher-centered versus a student-centered focus. Now, none of the definitions implicitly state that “teacher” automatically guarantees a more student-centered approach to the classroom but, generally, these definitions imply that “conductor” and “director” involve a more teacher-centered approach to the music classroom.

Next, consider the idea of identifying as a “conductor/teacher” in your music classroom, which is a term deliberately used by choral conductor and music educator, Sandra Snow, on her DVD *Choral Conducting/Teaching: Real World Strategies for Success*. Her definition for the term:

CONDUCTOR/TEACHER: emphasis is placed on pedagogy while upholding the expectations for artistry, embedded in the word “conductor.” (Snow, 2009)

Although the ideas in Snow's DVD are intended specifically for choral music educators and choral conductors, the characteristics on which she focuses

for conductor/teachers are easily transferrable to multiple and various music teaching and learning settings for adolescent students. Consider the following characteristics of Snow's conductor/teacher with regard to your own work as a music educator, regardless of musical area or medium:

- Employs enhanced methods of listening that involve hearing more and imposing less
- Completes score analysis with a thoughtful system; utilization of the score analysis as the basis of planning and conducting effective rehearsals
- Acknowledges context, which utilizes a fluid pedagogical approach for various situations and considers singers' skills and experiences, social factors, and learning styles
- Adapts; willing to abandon teaching strategies that are not working; to redirect, redeploy, extend, refine, and change rehearsal approach; to base decisions on in-the-moment, ongoing assessments of what the students are actually doing;
- Improvises; brainstorms, in real time, multiple teaching strategies designed to increase understanding of ensemble members; based upon a rich knowledge of teaching, improvisation encourages students' continual growth
- Facilitates; is an agent of change on the podium with a specific emphasis on development of musical thinking by ensemble members; includes a vast array of tools, including nonverbal and verbal strategies to stimulate critical thinking. (Snow, 2009)

Of key importance to the conductor/teacher approach is the intentionality that is encouraged during planning and teaching to acknowledge the many differences among musicians through a focus on accommodating students' varied skills, experiences, social factors, and learning styles. As discussed throughout chapter 1 of this book, adolescents are constantly changing in all kinds of ways; each adolescent is unique and must be approached on a case-by-case basis. The idea of a conductor/teacher in the adolescent music classroom makes great sense, as it involves taking into account all of the adolescent unpredictability (especially with regard to skill, experiences, social factors, and learning styles) on a daily basis and using it as an advantage, rather than a detriment.

All of this said, it is not wrong to refer to you as a teacher, conductor, director, or even a conductor/teacher. However, what *is* important is recognizing and acknowledging the differences between these words and the implications they each hold for practice and performance. Our work as *music educators* is to educate adolescents about music in all sorts

of ways, shapes, and forms—regardless of ensemble or general music class format. And although I am a huge proponent for the terms “conductor/teacher” and “student-centered teaching,” I acknowledge that I have seen many successful approaches within a variety of teaching settings with different groups of students and an array of music educators. It truly boils down to the individual philosophy of each music teacher. I no longer believe that there is one “best way” to teach adolescents music. Case in point: let us take a look at Deb (choir), Seth (choir), Gretchen (strings), and Michelle (choir), who are each extraordinary adolescent music educators but approach teaching their students in very different ways.

Deb maintains a very student-centered but authoritative approach to her middle school choral classroom and truly upholds a no-tolerance policy for anything but respectful behavior.

DEB: (*a coy smile on her face*) The kids will tell you, it is a *loving dictatorship*. Don't like it? *Not a problem!* Go take shop! Go do another class. It's not a democracy. *Nobody* will love them like me, but *my class*, thank you. I'm the boss. The only classroom rule I have is “You are required to show respect” and that's *all* that it takes. That's respect for the stuff and respect for the people. I have to follow the same exact rule that you do. I *have* to be respectful of you. Do I have to like you? No. But I do. Do you have to like me? No, but you'd better show me respect. If that doesn't work for you, I respect that . . . get out of here.

Deb's high expectations of students—both musically and personally—are key to the success of her students and her choral program. At the same time, her students adore her and she has fostered a welcoming and safe classroom culture. Students advance from her choir program as confident, independent musicians as well as supported, loved, and more compassionate people. Interestingly, Deb's students leave her program embracing and embodying democratic outcomes, even though they were accomplished in an authoritatively run music classroom.

Seth's approach to his middle school choirs resembles that of Deb—authoritatively run with an emphasis on democratic goals—evident in the following comment when asked about his role in his music classroom:

SETH: There is no democracy; this is an absolute dictatorship! My role is to show them through demonstration, through talking to them, through everything else, how to be in life. This goes beyond

singing. I want them to learn from me how to act in society. How to be good citizens as well as good musicians.

On the contrary, the following comments by Gretchen and Michelle indicate that these two teachers operate their classrooms quite differently than Deb and Seth. Their approaches to teaching are firmly rooted in stories from their own experiences as music students and follow a more student-centered, democratic approach to teaching adolescents.

GRETCHEN: I'm the conductor, but I'm not the only musician in the room. I can veto ideas but I do want to hear everybody else's idea of how they think a musical piece should go. As we get further along, I am more of a guide than anything; I'm there to bounce ideas off of. I try to let them figure out what they think a piece should be like in the beginning and then I'll bring in a recording or I'll bring in some perspective, either historical or just my own insight on things. When I was younger I did not like when a music teacher just walked in and told me, "This is how it should be because I said so." The world doesn't work like that anymore.

MICHELLE: I am a facilitator of music education. I am not a dictator, although I do tell the kids when they say (*in a whiny voice*), "That's not fair!" I'll say, "I'm sorry. This is a monarchy and I am queen." You know, so I'll use that line. But really, my music education was so forced that I have no idea how I became a music teacher. My elementary teacher, my middle school . . . it was just yell yell yell. You *will* sing *this!* It was just so authoritarian. We had no decisions. It was not the way I want to be. And I'm not saying that I'm a pot-smoking hippie or anything like (*in a high, fluty voice*), "I want my kids to make their own decisions," but I feel like I can give the kids a guideline and they can choose within that. And they still feel like they have ownership.

The bottom line here is that there is no "right" way to teach music to adolescents but, rather, everything is contextual. Consider all of the factors discussed in chapter 1 that contribute to the complexity of the adolescent music student—bodies growing sporadically, brains developing around a myriad of experiences, emotions coloring all situations, the emergence of identity and self-esteem, navigation of musical skills, and much more—and all of this happening at different rates for each student. There simply is no one-size-fits-all way to teach this population. The great part is that *you* get

to decide what approach works best for your music students within your own unique teaching situation, as well as what works best for you.

Nurturer Role

During my years as a middle school choir teacher I worked with students from all walks of life. Some of my students were raised in home environments with a strong family core; others were raised in appalling home situations or were literally homeless. Students' stories ran the gamut—they thrilled me, fascinated me, amused me, and horrified me. As a result, I worked hard to be a constant positive adult figure in my adolescent students' lives. I wanted them to know that—regardless of who they were and whatever their home circumstances—I was rooting for them.

With regard to home life, in 1968 Arthur Thomas Jersild published some very poignant comments about adolescents that still hold true today. He wrote that continued assurance of parents' love is invaluable during adolescent years, especially when there are no worries about how to *keep* their parents' love. As a result, adolescents tend to trust their parents (even in times of disagreement) and gain a sense of security that allows greater freedom to explore, to investigate, and to be themselves. In addition, parental love helps adolescents feel that they can make mistakes without always worrying about fatal consequences. However, as Jersild points out, parental love is not a shield against disappointments, errors of judgment, weaknesses, or does it guarantee good conditions at school, work, and other places. And although many children are fortunate to grow within a loving household, "evidence seems to show that many adolescents who are having a hard time come from an unfavorable home background" (Jersild 1968, 241). Adolescents raised within unfavorable circumstances must work to find affection and approval from adult figures outside of their homes and, often without readily available encouragement or guidance, must depend upon their own resources.

In today's society, an uncomfortably high percentage of students come from homes without adequate support, encouragement, or role models, which are "vital during the very early adolescent years because this is the time when identity begins to take shape" (Gerber 1994, 7). According to Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack (1986), the few hours that students spend with teachers each day are the most important opportunities for them to learn from adults in our culture. "Our culture has essentially delegated the upbringing of its young to educational institutions" (Csikszentmihalyi and McCormack 1986, 417). As a middle school choir teacher, I certainly

felt this “unofficial charge” from society to make a difference in my students’ lives above and beyond any musical training they received. Several of the middle school teachers to whom I spoke also felt a sense of duty to teach more than music, including Jay (choir and composition):

JAY: The longer I teach, the more I realize my role. My job is not just to teach them to sing well, read music, or perform. My job is use choral music as a means to teach them how to work hard and learn, teach themselves, work well with others, and expect the best from themselves. Beyond that, my job is to create opportunities for them to build and exercise strong character traits, and experience feelings and learn from them. Some include: the joy of success, the pride of a job well done as the result of hard work, memorable social experiences with friends, sympathy and love for others, dedication, perseverance, responsibility, moral fortitude, being open-minded, being tolerant of others and accepting them, and being a good person in general. Think of the character-building and teamwork-building activities one might do at camp or at a workshop. The activity teaches the character trait. For some teachers, it’s sports, dance, yearbook, scouting, and so on. Our activity is music. Always music.

Playing all of the roles that our many students need in their varied lives is an impossible goal, but we can still be an importance presence for our adolescent musicians. Remember that sometimes small and simple acts of kindness can make a huge difference to adolescent students during their daily comings and goings. For example, adolescents will certainly let *you* know that you are noticed—what you wear, what you drive, where you buy your groceries, when you look under the weather (my favorite)—it is how adolescents show that they care. In return, it is important that we notice *them* as well, which can help them feel good about themselves. Michelle (choir) used interactions with her students to build them up in all kinds of little ways that ultimately made big impacts. One of her stories:

MICHELLE: We had this one little girl, Hillary, and she was as quiet as a mouse. I had her for three years and she is in the top choir and works really hard. She’s just really, really quiet. I deemed her “The Ninja.” So if something happened, you know like sometimes the lights would flicker and I’d look at her and say, “You know, Hillary . . . *really?* We’re in class.” And she would grin and everyone would laugh; she loved it! She got some positive reinforcement,

some social pull . . . you know, and people paid attention to her. It was a big deal for her.

In my own music classroom, if I thought something nice about one of my students I always made it a point to actually *tell* that student what I was thinking. “I really like that color on you!” “What a great smile you have!” “You look quite dapper today—what’s the occasion?” I once overheard two of my middle school students talking about me: “She is the only teacher who ever notices that I get my hair cut.” I considered that *quite* the compliment and continue the practice today with whomever I’m around.

In addition to nurturing our adolescent students on an emotional level, part of our work as music teachers is to also nurture our students’ musical skills. The adolescent music classroom is a perfect setting to observe nature versus nurture at work. As discussed in chapter 1, during the specific years that we work with our adolescent music students, they are undergoing a tremendous amount of physical, emotional, and cognitive change; the “nature” piece of adolescent development is largely underway, operating on its own schedule for each individual adolescent. However, at the crossroads of physical development and desire for specialization (again, as discussed in chapter 1) our work must involve nurturing student musical development so that musical accomplishments are experienced and acknowledged (no matter how small) and students feel confident about their musical abilities. Otherwise, nature alone will solely influence students’ decisions about their present and future musical involvement.

Cautious Counselor Role

The teacher role of “nurturer” can sometimes become intertwined with the role of “counselor.” In the book *Counseling Skills for Teachers*, Jeffrey Kottler and Ellen Kottler wrote, “Whether or not you like it, whether you prepare for the role or not, you will be sought out as a confidante by children who have nowhere else to turn” (2007, 2). Of course we should be kind to distraught students; however, it is imperative to remember that we are not trained counselors. We are trained and licensed music educators, happy to be there for adolescent music students who need a shoulder to cry on or have a victory to celebrate. However, we have no business *counseling* our students in a variety of serious personal situations.

As teachers of adolescents, it is not uncommon for us to have students who learn about their parents’ divorce or the death of a family member

as they are dropped off at school in the morning. Or two best friends are suddenly friends no more. Perhaps a student's parent is abusing drugs, or a student is being badly bullied by a family member or a friend, struggling with his or her sexuality; or has not eaten in twenty-four hours. Sadly, music students often deal with situations that take personal precedence over their schooling. Therefore, it is imperative that, as music teachers, we do our best to recognize when our students need extra support or guidance. Keep on the lookout for warning signs such as changes in student mood, attitude, or work habits; self-destructive behaviors; cutting or signs of substance abuse; and so forth. If anything seems suspect, it is best to protect our students and ourselves by utilizing resources available by way of school counselors, administrators, and social workers.

The Role of Teacher, Not Friend

In nurturing or cautiously counseling students, whether personally or musically, adolescents can sometimes get a little confused about our role with them—often this happens when students are experiencing moments of lower self-esteem or are feeling a bit vulnerable (maybe their friend was mean to them; we are kind to them) or in moments of great jubilation (their crush finally asked them to the dance; they tell us and we get excited for them). However, during their formative years, adolescents need us to be their role model and not their friend. Gretchen (strings) remarked that “first, students understand that I am an adult and they’re the students and that we’re not going to be friends. It’s just not going to be that way.” However, she does share aspects of her personal life with students that pertain to classroom topics of conversation. For example, “I have two younger siblings who are both musicians. They are great fiddlers, so I bring them in to play music once a year for the kids, who can ask questions.” Jason (band) also commented on maintaining a teacher role with his students: “My relationship with my students is that of teacher and student. Crossing the boundary as a friend can lead to much difficulty and will be counterproductive, educationally.”

There is a difference between being friendly and being friends with our adolescent music students. From my own experiences, I acknowledge that adolescents can come across as mature and responsible young adults able to carry on mature, adult-like conversations. The juxtaposition of this side of them with their goofy nature is one of my favorite aspects of the age group. However, it is in those moments of maturity that the line could

be blurred between teacher and friend, creating challenges in maintaining teacher authority. To prevent such problems in your music program, consider proactive steps such as the following guidelines put forth by the University of Oregon Teaching Effectiveness Program (TEP):

- One of the best ways to maintain authority is to have good teaching and classroom management skills. If you are new to teaching, get some assistance in planning your lessons and go for a more structured approach in the beginning until you feel you have enough information about your students to handle them differently.
- Be well prepared and organized for each class. If you teach large groups, your presentation skills are very important. If you spend the majority of class time lecturing, your ability to engage and maintain your students' attention will be critical.
- Establish your credentials on the first day. Talk about your background and your particular areas of expertise. You will be able to offer them valuable guidance and if there are questions you cannot answer, you will quickly help them find a good resource.
- Be clear about your expectations. If you want to enforce certain policies regarding attendance, late assignments, missed exams, etc., be clear and concise and have these things included on your syllabus or information sheet that is handed out at the beginning of the term. If you want students to sit near the front, ask them to do this right away. Don't wait a week or more after seating patterns have been established.
- Consider how you dress as a possible factor in how students respond to you. An overly casual appearance may undermine your credibility—at least on the surface. It's important that you are comfortable and dressing up a bit in the beginning can sometimes help.
- The more you begin to know your students, the easier it will be to make decisions about how to relate to them. (tep.uoregon.edu)

Resourceful Provider Role

American psychologist Abraham Maslow first introduced his hierarchy of needs theory in his 1943 article "A Theory of Human Motivation." The theory suggests that people are motivated to fulfill certain basic needs such as food, water, sleep, and safety before fulfilling more complex needs such as love, friendship, and personal esteem. The cold, hard fact is that we will always have some adolescent students whose basic needs are not being met at home; the percentage of these students in our programs will vary

from school to school, year to year, and class to class. How can we expect students in such situations to "leave your baggage at the door, come in and make music!" if they have not eaten or slept in days? Or if finding basic clothing to wear is severely problematic? If they are living in their car with their family? Although we will not be able to fix all problems for our adolescent music students, it is admirable to make strides wherever possible. This section of chapter 2 addresses areas where we can potentially support students who are struggling and provide them with some of what they need to be able to engage in and enjoy what we are learning in our music classes.

In the school where I taught middle school choir, my students were at the lower socioeconomic end of our school district. The student population in my choral program was a mixed bag, with students coming from wealthy families moving into that side of the district, middle-class families, and low-income families. As a result, decisions with regard to concert dress, field trips, activities, and so forth began with consideration for the students whose families struggled. I wanted to make sure that everyone had a chance to be involved, regardless of their family's financial picture. For example, when field trip opportunities arose, I would solicit community businesses and individuals to sponsor students who were unable to pay for a trip (this was before the days of websites such as DonorsChoose.org). With regard to required concert dress, I kept concert attire simple and chose items that were easily attainable—white dressy shirt, black pants or skirt, and black socks or tights and shoes. I did not care about exact items that students wore (such as pants vs. skirt) other than it had to be dressy white above the waist and dressy black below the waist. Every time the seasons changed I emailed my colleagues with a list of concert clothing items, and many would donate requested pieces as they switched over seasonal wardrobes or as their children outgrew relevant items; these were housed in my classroom for anyone to borrow. When I had choir-logo shirts created (shirts for fun, not for performances), I raised the price of the hooded sweatshirt a couple of dollars—this was the most expensive of shirt choices, so students who chose this item typically did not come from families struggling with finances—and used these extra dollars to provide a choir t-shirt free of charge to any student who wanted one but could not afford one.

During interviews with the contributing middle school music teachers, I was impressed and inspired by the "above and beyond" efforts made by several of the teachers to additionally provide for their students in inventive and thoughtful ways. I would like to share a few of the efforts put forth by Bethany (general music), James (choir), and Sean (choir).

from school to school, year to year, and class to class. How can we expect students in such situations to “leave your baggage at the door, come in and make music!” if they have not eaten or slept in days? Or if finding basic clothing to wear is severely problematic? If they are living in their car with their family? Although we will not be able to fix all problems for our adolescent music students, it is admirable to make strides wherever possible. This section of chapter 2 addresses areas where we can potentially support students who are struggling and provide them with some of what they need to be able to engage in and enjoy what we are learning in our music classes.

In the school where I taught middle school choir, my students were at the lower socioeconomic end of our school district. The student population in my choral program was a mixed bag, with students coming from wealthy families moving into that side of the district, middle-class families, and low-income families. As a result, decisions with regard to concert dress, field trips, activities, and so forth began with consideration for the students whose families struggled. I wanted to make sure that everyone had a chance to be involved, regardless of their family’s financial picture. For example, when field trip opportunities arose, I would solicit community businesses and individuals to sponsor students who were unable to pay for a trip (this was before the days of websites such as DonorsChoose.org). With regard to required concert dress, I kept concert attire simple and chose items that were easily attainable—white dressy shirt, black pants or skirt, and black socks or tights and shoes. I did not care about exact items that students wore (such as pants vs. skirt) other than it had to be dressy white above the waist and dressy black below the waist. Every time the seasons changed I emailed my colleagues with a list of concert clothing items, and many would donate requested pieces as they switched over seasonal wardrobes or as their children outgrew relevant items; these were housed in my classroom for anyone to borrow. When I had choir-logo shirts created (shirts for fun, not for performances), I raised the price of the hooded sweatshirt a couple of dollars—this was the most expensive of shirt choices, so students who chose this item typically did not come from families struggling with finances—and used these extra dollars to provide a choir t-shirt free of charge to any student who wanted one but could not afford one.

During interviews with the contributing middle school music teachers, I was impressed and inspired by the “above and beyond” efforts made by several of the teachers to additionally provide for their students in inventive and thoughtful ways. I would like to share a few of the efforts put forth by Bethany (general music), James (choir), and Sean (choir).

Bethany

When Bethany began teaching at her middle school, it was a very “bare bones” situation. She was hired to teach general music, but had no materials or instruments other than a piano. Unfortunately, enrollment has dropped over recent years at Bethany’s school, but she was able to take advantage of the situation to enrich the general music program and creatively provide more musical opportunities for her students.

Our school has the opposite problem from other schools and this is where I’m lucky because we have tons of empty rooms. So I just sneak rooms for myself, like, “This is my keyboard lab. This is my guitar lab. This is my storage room.” We have space to do that, which is really awesome. I don’t have to worry about that aspect at all.

In addition, Bethany is quite resourceful at securing classroom furniture or equipment that she needs from within and outside of her school.

Desks: I have desks—the kinds of desks you can put stuff in, without chairs attached. I went around the building and purposely sought out those desks so I can use them in all sorts of different ways.

White board: I put up my own white board. I bought shower board at Home Depot and put that up myself with some double-stick tape.

Projector: I have a projector that I got through DonorsChoose.org. That’s a website for teachers where you can describe what you would like for your classroom (I think it has to be less than \$1,000 or something) and then people go to the website and donate—like random people—or you can just tell all of your friends about it and all of your friends can go to your site and donate \$10 here or \$15 there. When you meet your goal for that project, the site buys the stuff for you and sends it to you and it’s yours! It’s pretty awesome. It is only for smaller stuff, though, so we couldn’t use it to build up our keyboard lab because then we’d only get one keyboard at a time—kind of slow—but I used it to get my projector, which is really great and it is helpful to have that.

Guitars: I try to find sites, such as www.littlekidsrock.org². It’s a non-profit organization that trains teachers—not just music teachers, but any teachers—how to implement guitars into your classroom, as well as raise the money to get enough guitars for your school. The only requirement is that you have to already know how to play the guitar. As a result, you basically get to teach acoustic guitars in

your classroom for free. They also have drum sets and keyboards and other instruments too. So when I find a program like that, I incorporate it into what I'm already doing with the students.

James

James is very thoughtful in his efforts to show support for his middle school students. For example, When James attends choral festival or takes his students on a trip, he makes sure that everyone has a lunch to eat, especially as a large number of his students are part of the free and reduced lunch program.

When we go on a trip and we're going to be gone for lunch, I give my class list to our lunch ladies and they will go through and pull out the 30 or 50 kids that are on free lunch or reduced lunch. And I'll say, "I want a sack lunch for every single one of those kids and the ones that it costs fifty cents for a lunch, charge my account." And so, when we go on trips and they can't pack lunches, I have three boxes full of sack lunches and can say to the free and reduced lunch students, "Don't worry. I've taken care of you." Some of those kids will pack their own lunch, anyway, so I've got extra lunches left over for those who forgot or whatever, and they're hungry. Here you go.

James also maintains a clothing closet in his choir room from which students or parents may purchase items to wear for the concerts at cost price.

I have friends at Goodwill and I tell them, "Will you please set aside every black skirt you find and any black shoes?" I will get a couple of trash sacks full of black skirts and black shoes and they cost me a dollar or two dollars apiece. So it will cost only \$50 or \$100 and I have a boatload of stuff. I've got them hanging up in my closet and I will tell parents, "Here's what it cost for this skirt and here's what it cost for these pants. . . . If you have any problems with paying that amount, you talk to me and it's free to you." We also have people that donate clothes to us, including choir shirts that their students no longer need because they've moved to the high school. I'm trying to be sensitive to families' needs and make things available. And I tell my students, "Look, I was a hand-me-down family. My clothes were given to me by someone else when I was growing up." So we talk about that. "And some of your parents are out of work and you cannot afford these things. Please come talk to me. I will find a way to help you out. That's our family, that's how we clothe our kids, that's the way we function."

Sean

The Durham School of the Arts (DSA) is part of the Durham Public School District in Durham, North Carolina. And, although an arts magnet school, it is not a private school; students apply and are admitted based on a competitive lottery system and come from every corner of the entire school district. As a result, the population of the DSA is very diverse in many ways. Several students in the choral program at the DSA come from families who severely struggle socioeconomically. In response, Sean and his choral colleague, Amy Davis, provide food for these students every Monday morning, paid for with their own money. These teachers take turns each weekend picking up extra groceries that they discreetly have available to specific students, including granola bars, fruit, jars of peanut butter, and bread.

SEAN: Students can (and do) come to us throughout the week asking to “go downstairs” (if they are with me in the upstairs room) or “go to the Chorus Closet” (if they are in the downstairs room). This, essentially, is code for, I need some food, and may I please go get some? This allows us to nod or provide them with an “errand” that helps mask what they are doing. When this happens, they tend to stay there for about 5 five minutes and eat the food before returning to their chorus class.

When approaching a long break from school, such as winter break, Sean and Amy compile a small bundle of food for these students to take with them when they leave that last day of school. They package everything in a DSA choir backpack—something that is commonly seen around the school by all students who use these backpacks to carry gym clothes, school supplies and books, or various odds and ends—so this act is truly carried out in an incredibly discreet fashion.

It is not uncommon for adolescent music students to struggle a bit during tumultuous times of development and growth, especially as everything is out of their control. As minors, they can also struggle as victims of circumstance if their family is experiencing some difficulty. However, by supporting our students through that first level of survival needs—even in small ways—we will help them to establish a bit of stable ground when in school, upon which they can build their musical knowledge and enrich their musical experiences.

Our work as music teachers is multifaceted, from the settings in which we teach to the goals we establish, to the roles that we play. All of these

elements, in combination with our individual stories and life experiences, guarantee a complex and interesting ride for all who are up to the challenge. Teaching music to adolescents is not for the faint of heart, but it can be largely rewarding and a great deal of fun.

☹ AND 😊 EXPERIENCES WITH TEACHING ADOLESCENT MUSICIANS

It is so important to keep in mind that every age group has both positive and less positive characteristics. For me, adolescents are funny, quirky, brave, guarded, loyal, caring, empathetic, wicked, vicious, and occasionally a bit smelly. During our conversations, the contributing music teachers shared notable aspects of teaching adolescent musicians, ultimately compiling two delightful lists that are very representative of what it is like to work with an adolescent music population, *regardless of teaching setting*. I hesitate to say that these are “pro” and “con” lists, as I do not like the idea of there being “cons” when working with any age group. Rather, I like to think of these sorts of descriptors as challenges—hence, my use of the smiling or frowning icons. Let’s say that this guy ☹ represents things that are more challenging about working with adolescent music students; oppositely, 😊 represents things that are really enjoyable about working with adolescent music students.

☹

- I know that it’s part of the age because they haven’t had that brain growth yet, but their inability to logically deduce anything is challenging.
- Their ability to only half-hear what you say and then twist it into something that’s completely the opposite of what you said. They twist words very easily and that drives me crazy.
- The attention spans at times, especially this age group. I find that kids, more and more because of video games or computers, do not read facial expressions very well. And I’m finding that frustrating.
- They never shut up. (*laughs*) That’s not entirely true. You can get them focused, but they don’t know when to turn off that energy off when the time to focus arrives.
- There is a lot of drama (*chuckles*) going on with them too, you know, emotionally, physically, whatever it happens to be that day.
- Middle school does have that reputation of teasing and bullying issues. You know, kids are mean. Even with kids at our school, where the school’s mission is similar to my classroom mission, there are still icky things

that happen and icky things that kids say. Today a boy came into my class crying because another boy was jealous of his skinny jeans so he put them in the toilet during dance class. It's little things that make you wonder—what? Why? How is that even possible?

- I'm definitely aware that the emotions are less predictable.
- There are those kids whose parents are forcing them to be in orchestra so their attitude reflects that, which can bring down the group dynamic.
- The only part of dealing with the kids that I don't like is their parents. I get so upset when I talk to a parent and they've never been to a concert, and I just cry for them sometimes because they have no idea that this gift that their child has even exists. So many times I want to take these kids home and just raise them and nurture them, but I can't.
- I don't like the bullying that I see in middle school. It makes me sad.
- The smell. That's probably really the only thing that I would change. I would give them all deodorant and teach them how to use it if I could! (*laughing*) That's probably one of the worst parts of the job—if not, *the* worst part of the job. A lot of what I do involves close physical proximity with my kids. Even some amount of touch—holding hands, tapping a rhythm on the upper back, and so forth, and I *really* have to work to not show my disgust on my face when I do that. And you know, I *absolutely* will not allow that to happen because I don't ever want that child to think that I'm repulsed by them—even if I am. Yeah, that's the hardest part.
- Parents who think that their kids can do no wrong. For the most part, parents are pretty reasonable. But there are some parents who hear a story from their child and it's only a partial truth. So I get angry phone calls, or angry parents, who haven't stopped to hear the other side of an issue. I don't take that very well. I'm very patient and let parents just kind of vent and express themselves. Then I say, "Let me bring some other truths to this." And usually we come to a better sense of what's going on. So that can be hard.
- Being underfunded is not fun. I remember our former band teacher saying, "Our music program is expected, but not supported."
- The biggest thing that I don't enjoy is that the kids are given very few choices of what they can do at a very young age. If you're in sixth grade you have to decide if you're going to be a music student for years to come—and if you choose music, you do not have any other options such as foreign language, art, shop, and so forth. That puts a lot of pressure on the kids and their parents when they're in fifth grade and trying to make decisions. At this age, participation in music is an experiment; this is just supposed to be a fun introduction into music. Meanwhile,

the parents are saying, "Well, you know we have to think about college." You're so far away from college and I just want your child to be able to experience music. I'm having a lot of personal struggle with this aspect of teaching middle school.

- They are at that age where they are just *fickle* about everything. They can't decide what they want. One day they love this and the next day they hate it. That kind of stuff is annoying because I do try to create lessons that they are going to be engaged in. So if they're all talking about keyboards, then I'll say, "We're all going to go to the keyboards next." And they start working on that and then they are like, "We hate keyboards!"
- The one thing that does weigh on my patience at times with middle school is the whole issue of peer conformity. I know that it's just something so inherent to the age, and it probably has always been this way. But it sometimes seems like you're combating the whole issue of conformity. What that means for students is a lack of willingness to step into an artistic frame of mind and go forward and take a risk and sing alone or do something like that in fear of what their peers would say.
- When parents' prior learning experiences haven't really helped the student develop a comfort for curiosity, comfort, compassion, or even creativity. I dislike feeling as though I have to help steer students properly when they don't come equipped with a wheel for maneuvering their "vehicle" toward the future. I guess we could call this wheel "understanding" or "awareness," and it relies on four tires, which I would call discipline, dedication, decency, and the ability to dream. Trying to rebuild a vehicle that comes damaged at the factory makes our jobs an awful lot harder. I've seen a lot of children with an awful lot of baggage in the public sector and it hurts us all as a society, as a public, and as an ensemble. And yeah, it hurts me personally to know that kids are mistreated or unloved or dismissed—they're just kids. I just can't stand that idea; kids are just kids.



- Their minds are like sponges. They absorb *so* much on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis. It amazes me.
- I enjoy that you get to shape and mold their first times of starting an instrument, something they are always going to remember.
- I like their personalities.
- For the most part they are eager to try things. (By the time they get to high school they have pretty much made up their minds on what they want to listen to, who they want to listen to, and what advice they want.)

- They have such strong imaginations and they use their imaginations in humorous ways.
- I like that they're still kids but they're trying to be adults, so there are those moments where they're really naïve and cute and excited about things—even the kids that look like they're eighteen and have a beard—they can get excited. I really like that about them. And I like that they are still insecure because it's a little bit more of a challenge to get them to *try* things. Like I think it's my job to trick them into trying things and then liking them. I always feel successful when they're like, "I'm not going to do this," and then in the end they love it! I really like that challenge!
- The transformative or transcending power of music helps kids by elevating their way of thinking, not *just* enjoying it. And I enjoy the feeling that we're giving them something that will last a lifetime in terms of their appreciation for art, as well as a vehicle to develop other areas of their life.
- I enjoy their naiveté, their sensibility, and their inclination to learn new things without a lot of ingrained prejudice that older youths tend to exhibit.
- I enjoy their personality and their level of awkwardness.
- They let me experiment with them. Sometimes I am really up-front with them and say, "We're going to try this and see how this goes." And they're totally fine with it and they never complain about it. When they do complain about it, it lasts for five minutes at most and they're already onto another thought—whereas high schoolers' complaints will last for a whole week! (*laughs*)
- Their minds are kind of like squirrels, you know? They're on the nut and then they're at the tree and then they're like, "Oh my God, dog! I need to run!" You know? (*laughs*) So I really appreciate that about teaching them.
- I like to watch the way that they interact with each other. I think as an adult, no matter what career you are in, you have to find something to enjoy on a daily basis. And just standing in the hallways and watching them is a good moment for me. If you stand in the middle school hallway you hear hysterical things and funny conversations about things that are important to them at their age. You can reminisce: "Oh yeah, that's how I was in middle school." (*chuckles*)
- They're so moldable, in their way. And so *not* moldable in a way, you know what I mean? There are some things that you can really impress upon them, and there are other things that you'll just have to let go.
- They are fun, goofy, aloof, and willing to please.

- They need lots of guidance.
- They are learning, growing, and changing at an incredible rate. I think the physical, emotional, and social change they experience through middle school is much greater than that of high school.
- They have a lot of energy and if you can focus their attention, it can be a lot of fun. But if it's unfocused, then it's not so much fun.
- Middle schoolers are at the age where they want to be treated like young adults. And there are moments where they are just that. And those are really neat times of conversations and experiences.
- There's never a day that's the same. You know, there's always something new. There are a lot of quick developments. I'm still trying to figure out how to help guys go from unchanged voice to changed voice and take them through the process. And help them feel secure about themselves while going through that process.
- They can do amazing musical things that people don't expect. One of my pet peeves is when people say, "Well they're just middle schoolers. You can't expect them to do that." And they're like, "Yes we can."
- They can do more than people think, and they can still be kids and can have a lot of fun.
- Their sense of humor.
- I love that they wear their heart on their sleeve. They are just so ridiculously honest sometimes.
- I love that they can be a different person from one day to the next and when they appreciate something, they *really* appreciate it. And when they don't like something, they tell you! And they ask very frank questions that sometimes are difficult to answer, but they appreciate my honesty right back. So, in some ways, it's a little selfish of me because I get *so much* back from them, too. You know, I learn things from them and I get so much *love* from them, that it just comes full-circle and makes the whole thing worthwhile on a whole other level for me.
- What don't I enjoy?! I enjoy watching them experience the world for the first time. Elementary is very handholding. But middle school is where they start experiencing things on their own.
- I love watching them become young adults. When they leave me in eighth grade and there's this big shift—especially at the end-of-the-year show—there's a big shift and seeing them change and become young adults because they have complete creative control. And so, I always tell them right before the show, "Look Baby B's, it's time for you to fly. I've given you the tools and I've taught you and now it's time for you to show me what you know." And they do.

- I love their curiosity.
- I love their emotions. I love when they try to be tough, because it makes me laugh. But I love how they are experiencing all these things for the first time and we get to be part of that.
- I think my favorite thing is their limitless potential. I think a lot of directors don't see it that way and say things like, "Oh, they're middle school kids so there's no way they could do this, or perform here." Their potential really is limitless.
- I enjoy being part of the maturation of the student musician as well as the young adult. I'm one of the few teachers in the building that has them for three years, sometimes four years, depending on what feeder they go to. And it's exciting to see them mature as a responsible young adult as well as a musician.
- I love their energy and their enthusiasm.
- There's really nothing I don't like about my kids. Even when they're trying to discover hygiene and come in smelling like they just sprayed for bugs or they come in like they just came out of a garbage can.
- They're a little more independent but at the same time their minds are like a sponge so they're absorbing everything around them.
- Their enthusiasm. They're like little open books—most of them. And very willing to learn, very *excited* about learning. I enjoy getting them to do things they don't normally think they can do. Too many teachers, they don't think a middle school kid can do anything. They just think that this is some sort of transitional period—which it is, but you can still accomplish great things with them.
- At times their sense of humor can be hilarious—*accidentally*. They can say some of the dumbest things you've ever heard that are just *hilarious*.
- Mostly their enthusiasm.
- I love that I get to watch them develop, not just as musicians, but also as thinkers.
- The absolute exuberance for everything they do, especially if they're excited about it.

DIGEST

As chapter 1 focused on the adolescent music student, in this chapter we have focused on the middle-level music educator. Much of this chapter involves contemplation on individual approaches to teaching adolescent music students to encourage and deepen our thinking about our own teaching beliefs and practices, as well as to help us reflect upon the

stories that have contributed (and may still contribute) to our work. You are encouraged to go forth and engage a fellow music teacher or two in this process of self-examination and reflection. Sometimes the act of discussing and comparing stories and beliefs with another person provides a greater opportunity to examine current understandings of one's work and roles as a current or future music educator.