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Professional Literature Resources utilized for Musical Quality Unit Study Fall 2016.

Nelson, Robert B., Aesthetics in the Bandroom, *Music Educators Journal* Jan. (1994) Vol. 80:4 (24-27)

Robert B. Nelson discusses the value of aesthetic education and offers practical ideas for incorporating it into band class. As he points out, theory and philosophy about aesthetics abound, but practical ideas do not. Music teachers tend to teach the way they have learned, and so this aesthetic element is often overlooked because they do not know how to address the subject. Plus, since students, parents, and administrators tend to believe band is about rehearsing repertoire, besides this being a familiar task to the teacher, it is the way to achieve class structure and control as well. Nelson defines aesthetics and uses Abeles, Hoffer and Klotman's six characteristics of aesthetics as found in *Foundations of Music Education* (1984) to clarify aesthetics' purpose and effect. The aesthetic experience involves:

enjoyment, emotional response, thinking about what is being heard; calling on prior experience and knowledge to relate to it, focused attention, personal experience, and a richer life as a result of the music. Nelson rightly points out that most band classes focus on performance and correct technique, which is based on a behaviorist mindset of music. Although correct notes and rhythms are a basis for musical quality, they are not the end, but the means. With modern access to music of all types, it is incumbent on the music instructor to guide young learners to be informed, critical listeners.

Along with promoting the value of aesthetics in music education, Nelson supplies practical ideas for incorporating guided listening in band class. Ideas like: Units on nationalism, ethnic music, histories of music notation or forms. Theme units such as love, peasant life, war, and pastoral scenes. Student, faculty, or guest solo/ensembles could come to exemplify various aesthetic themes. Singing parts can aide in expression. Excerpts from great literature can be written in several keys and learned as scale studies. These could be related to a composer, composition, style period, form, or extramusical reference. Alterations of musical elements: major/minor, dynamics, tempo, meter, style followed by discussion about feelings and sound helps serve as basis of informed and critical listening as well. Trading clinics after school with other band directors, and programs notes to educate the audience (parents, administrators) also help address the issue of expectations previously cited as encumbrances to teaching aesthetics in the classroom. Heavy reliance on reflection questions, discussion, and listening in the classroom is stressed. I gleaned many good ideas for teaching aesthetics, an International Baccalaureate standard at City MS/HS while I aided there. I am one of the teachers born from the behaviorist model, and needed ideas for incorporating aesthetics in my bands.

1. Smeltz, Hanna. Reframing Student Practice to Facilitate Lifelong, Joyful Musicianship *Music Educator's Journal*, Dec (2012) Vol. 99:2 (51-55)

In her quest to aid students to pursue lifelong music participation, Smeltz combined interviews with her adult students, research of her peers, parent surveys and student feedback/videos to propose a method of practicing which remains joyful and fulfilling for students. The idea is that if they enjoy it, they will continue it. Research shows that most professional practice is aimed at efficiency, analysis and time with repetitive technique practice, with little improvisation or originality. These methods may make practice a chore, and remove the element of love of the instrument and love of creating music. Smeltz evaluations of the most often used assessments of students, practice charts and performance tests exposed their shortcomings. Although increased adult practice time (3 hrs/day) seems to correlate with achievement, prolonged practice (over 4 hrs/day) lead to injury and burnout. Considering that students in school may have a very low threshold before burnout, (minutes, in fact) the practice charts rewarding solely amount of *time* could be their undoing. Other studies show, for instance, that practice strategies (isolating passages, tempo variations) increase achievement more than increased practice time. However, without modeling and instruction in practice strategies, young students may not know how to utilize this. Similarly, although the performance test doesn't have the time element attached, knowing *how* to practice is, again, the students' ongoing struggle. Furthermore, the selection for test is usually of the teacher's choosing, so motivation to practice is low.

To begin her search for alternatives, Smeltz surveyed her adult musician friends to see what motivated them. The resulting sample was eighty-nine amateur and professional musicians from all over the world, who play all types of genres. Their perception of "practice" varied, some simply jammed or played for their own enjoyments, others use playing as solitary therapy time. Some, however, viewed "practice" as a negatively charged, necessary chore, but they all enjoyed it. Then Smeltz took an eight student (7th grade level) sampling, interviewing them and their parents, and viewing videos of their practice time.

Surprisingly, they all reported enjoying practice spending much time playing for fun, playing songs for family, etc. However, in spite of instruction in class about practice strategies, students did not approach with a systematic, organized, practice plan which studies show to be most efficient.

Providing structure, organization and self-awareness in practice is the most effective, according to Smeltz and other researchers. Motivating students to practice like this, without taking away their joy, was the issue, and is the reason I found this article most helpful in developing my lesson plans. She used part of each rehearsal time to brainstorm practice strategies, writing them on large chart paper at the front of the room. It was a collaboration, she tried some practice strategies herself, then shared. The students enjoyed

adding to the list. At the end of the year, she repeated the eight students' interviews, parent interviews and videos and found that use of practice strategies had increased. Focusing on practice goals, alternating with exploration of the instrument, instead of practice charts and performance tests met the goal of organized practice and maintaining joy in practice. She included a figure illustrating some of the brainstorm ideas in her article, and I used some of these as a basis for my lesson plan on practice strategies.