Master of Music Education, Northern State University

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**NSU MME Program Objectives**

**Objective #1** Program objective: **Music education and pedagogy**Objective description: Students will demonstrate advanced competencies in music education and pedagogy.

**Objective #2**Program objective: **Performance, conducting, music history, and music theory** Objective description: Students will gain knowledge and skills in performance, conducting, music history, and music theory analysis.

**Objective #3**Program objective: **Global music perspectives** Objective description: Students will develop graduate-level perspectives on contemporary issues and problems in music education, including global music perspectives.

**Objective #4**Program objective: **Problem solving** Objective description: Students will use analytical, technical, and critical thinking skills to anticipate, identify, analyze, and solve problems as they apply to music education

**MUSC 735 American Music Survey**

American Music Survey was a very informative and educational course. The information that we studied was for the most part fully applicable in most situations. While studying the concepts that were presented were in chronological order, these ideas, concepts, and timelines helped me choose a different method in my own teaching which provided me with several new ways for presentation. Although the idea of using America music in my classroom was not necessarily new, however, the materials from this class provided me several avenues for presentation.

Something I found enjoyable was the experience of new material in the music history timeline of American Music. There were several things that I was not exposed to. I really enjoy music closer to the Modern Period. It tends to be much more relevant to our students. Knowing that our students are not exposed to this type of music (let’s say never), I have found that when exposed to this type of music it is just as just as good and interesting as the music they listen to. Being able to share my passion of Modern Music Period and Musique Concrete was something truly meaningful, sharing passion, materials and ideas created a very positive and meaningful experience. In my classroom we have studied Musique Concrete and complete a comprehensive learning project in Garage Band, where we create a soundscape project allowing the students to explore this type of music and how to create this music using sound examples, pre-recorded sounds, imports from YouTube, and other clips that are royalty free. This continues to work well with my students, and it continues to help create an excite in music exploration. I am continuing to learn more about this topic and expand my knowledge as an educator and learner through research and teaching experimentation.

**MUSC 775 Foundations in Music Education Trend/Psychology**

Foundations of Music Education Trends, History, and Psychology was a difficult start for me. I started my time in the MME in the middle of the rotation. I did not have a foundation of some information, making my experience in this class very difficult, and many times not enjoyable. However, I was able to turn this around and learn many different concepts, new concepts and even reinforce the knowledge I already had. Because this class relies solely on self-study, I struggled to understand some concepts. After some reflection and self-direction to better my growth. The class presented some very interesting topics that I use very frequently in my classes, and some topics that I do not. Each topic presented is an expansion of myself as an educator and I am very thankful that I have been exposed to them. This class has been beneficial to my profession is the understanding and way that I look at the different psychological theories and studies. These served as a refresher for me. They were very similar to those topics that I have studied in prior Psychology classes. Diving deeper into the Music Learning Theory was very helpful as this theory was new, and I was not fully aware of its inner workings. I was able to grasp the theory a fair amount.

**MUSC 751 Advanced Conducting and Performance Practice**

Advanced conducting were the most beneficial and helpful classes that I have taken, and I will continue to look for possibilities in this field, I am very passionate about conducting and plan to pursue a DMA in this area. I was able to understand how to work with groups of all levels, to conduct and portray meaningful and expressive music using gestures and body language which guide the musicians under my direction. Expressing the line through the gestures I use, which was difficult at first, but as we studied further and practiced the music it became second nature. I plan to use these methods with my groups to better help them understand expression and emotion in music in the coming future.

Upon continuing study of the Messiah were of the most common materials that were studied, these scores opened some new possibilities in score study, and even literature. I have applied the concepts presented in building my own skill set, and gesture toolbox for my instrumental groups. We were provided with the opportunity to interact with each other in small groups and provide feedback on each other work to help better analyze how we perform as conductors.

**MUSC 716 Technology for Music Educators**

Technology is an integral part of our job as educator’s. The use of technology in the classroom better enhances our students experience and allows use to reach many different facets of learning that cannot normally be reached in the traditional sense. Learning about different programs, recording software, and games that can enrich learning has been beneficial in the implementation of technology in my classroom and has created more excitement towards learning.

In my classes we perform a lot of creation activities especially in my music appreciation classes, and upper elementary classes, I will be able to utilize these practices in my work as an educator. Many new possibilities have presented themselves, but the main way is by having my students create soundscapes and story creation using the sound clips, file imports (Royalty free tracks), pre-recording of sounds in live form. This will help my students see that field of music does not only include that of a music teacher. Most students find this type of project interesting, and the final product produces so many unbelievable possibilities.

**MUSC 782 Foundations of Music Education Trends/Philosophy**

Music Education Philosophy for me was a very interesting undertaking with many ideas and conceptions that were both thought provoking and completely radical. While working through the semester, many times I found myself comparing what I know, love, and have proved successful to those which were presented. This was very interesting and although the readings were extremely lengthy, I found several of them beneficial.

Ethics is something I find that is missing or overlooked in our teaching society. Too many teachers take things to personal or act unprofessional and unethical when posed with questions or ideas that are not their own or out of their comfort zone. I find that sometimes we need to step back, look at each situation and understand where these thoughts maybe coming from, which at times is easier said than done. We also need to be to explain to our students (I prefer the term learners as that implies a constant state of learning in my mind: as I am still a learner as well) why we are learning the current concepts, what benefits it will provide them for their future, and how they will possibly use these concepts in the role as a well-educated citizen. When we get offended and go after students, this causes a chain reaction where the student could or does shut down or stop working for that educator. Several forms of ethics were presented in the reading and align to our classroom in many ways. It has been noted all too many times that these are violated or overlooked at times. This is one of my mantras as a teacher/educator, always do what is right for each student no matter what your beliefs are (keep your personal beliefs out of the classroom such as your religion, or acceptance), it may be more work, but they will soar to new heights if you do. I have attached my Teaching Philosophy which was reconstructed in this class at the end of this document (Appendix A).

Composition in the classroom is an area that I visit more frequently than not. I absolutely love composing music, and love to see what my students can create. We find in our standards that there is a set of creating standards, and objectives, but no guide as to how to successfully carry that out. I have found over the past eight years as I have used composition in the classroom, that there is no one solution. I can completely dictate what the rules, guidelines, and parameters of how the composition should be written, or I can give a skeleton outline and let their imaginations run free. They will inquire, ask questions, share with you their ideas, and even ask feedback in this form of teaching composition. I like to always remain open with them on their ideas, and instead of saying “*You need to do this…”. Or “You should do this…”.* I like to use phrases such as *“What do you think of this?”* Or “*Have you tried something like this?”*

**MUSC 715 Music Theory and Analysis for the Music Educator**

This course reinforced most of what I already knew about music theory. Music theory is a very strong area in my music ability, knowledge and skill set. We studied many different basic concepts, developed, and structured lessons, and identified areas or concepts that could be used in our daily instruction. While analyzing many different styles, forms, and genres of music the class maintained and kept my interest. All the work in this course was structured to help with a full analysis of Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony Movement no. 1. The process for this analysis was to create diagrams for the work, listening maps, and even detailed description of what we heard and noticed through our score study. My final project in this class was a music theory unit which used many different components: 1) Understanding the Major Scale, 2) Understanding Scale Degrees, 3) Understanding Form, 4) Understanding Chords and Progressions, and 5) Analyzing a Pop Song.

**MUSC 766 School Music Administration**

Policies and procedures set in place in a school music program are beneficial in many ways, in School Music Administration we studied the many ways to run our music programs and looked at the many different tasks that the school music administrator is responsible for. I was able to take these daunting tasks and create a more manageable workload. The resources that were made available to us in this class are helpful, I have kept them all and use them often. One of my biggest takeaways from this class was how to organize and run a music program, and how to relevantly evaluate and choose or write a curriculum. Starting in a new school this year my knowledge and my ability to develop a strong program from the bottom up.

**MUSC 785 General Music Pedagogy**

This course was very interesting, starting with a very vague and unrelentless hate for Music Learning Theory, I was able to better understand where this theory originated a from a little more. Gordon had some great ideas and fantastic homemade words. The practice of MLT in the music classroom is very prominent in the tried-and-true practices of every other theory out there. I learned that Gordon took all the great ideas and combined them into one theory, allowing him to create super theory although this is merely my opinion. I was able to take some methodology from MLT and try them in my past and current classrooms with ease. I still do not love Music Learning Theory, but I will continue to investigate this theory and try new ideas and concepts that I have learned.

The many different teaching methods that we studied were very useful, I have adopted several in my classroom, or have used them in my fifteen years of teaching and will continue to do so. The teaching methods we studied were Kodaly, Dalcroze, Orff, Teaching for Musical Understanding, Music Learning Theory, and Suzuki. They all have positive attributes that can be applied to modern music learning and teaching. I plan to extend my teaching toolbox with further study. My one take away from MLT was Whole-Part-Whole. This method is very beneficial in my teaching, I have been using this in my rehearsals and music classroom, but I am now better able to understand it more fully.

**MUSC 752 Advanced Rehearsal Techniques and Pedagogy**

This course was another class that I found most beneficial to my learning as a teacher and conductor. The study of Holst’s Suite in Eb, and Bartok’s Romanian Folk Dances, although we were required to only study one, I choose to study both for my benefit and expansion of my repertory. I was in the instrumental section, but I also studied the Schubert Mass in G a bit as well. I learned several more advanced techniques in expressive conducting, communication of the line to the ensemble, and how to better understand the different gestures of different conductors. My final project was a comprehensive instrument handbook, my instrument of choice and passion was the piano. At the end of the course, we compiled the handbook into a final master copy which we all have access to.

**MUSC 777 Curriculum Writing**

This course taught me many ways to look at a curriculum in our programs, schools, and education systems. I was provided many opportunities to review curriculum, expand my current curriculum, or even develop a new curriculum. I used the current curriculum that we had in my school for our beginning band program and worked to develop a more detailed and success-oriented system for our students. The goal in this work was to enhance students’ success, promote confidence and even create better practice habits in young instrumental musicians. The system in my project was based on a belt system where student achievement was visible, providing a more instant gratification although time was spent getting there. The many colors in the belt system helped students gain a lasting confidence which will promote growth and retention in our beginning band program.

**MUSC 772 Research in Music Education**

This course was an introductory course to research in music education. While music education is a constantly producing results, data, and study on how our field works, this allowed a much closer look in the way that research can benefit my classroom. After reading two complete textbooks in a total of six weeks, we gained a fair amount of knowledge on Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods research. We then had to choose a topic, submit a proposal, and an Institutional Review Board Request. Once these documents were approved then we were to conduct out research project and create a document which contained a literature review, methods discussion, data and results discussion, and a final discussion and commentary on our project. Because students are not fully aware of how to self-regulate in individual practice, I choose to complete my study on practice habits in middle school students. I have noticed since our work with this topic that our program has had an increase in effective practice habits.

**MUSC 743 Jazz Pedagogy for the Music Educator**

In this course we looked at Jazz Music in chronological order. Interaction with other students and the instructor(s) through discussion posts and assignments, allowed use to discuss the material intellectually. Listening examples were also discussed showing us the many different types of jazz, how they sound, and the many different interpretations one can find when searching for quality examples. I found this class extremely beneficial because I have never had a “true” Jazz Education class. My only interaction with Jazz Music was through Jazz Band in high school. Because that was performance based/oriented not much time was devoted to the development of a complete understanding. I now have a better understanding to teach Jazz more often, provide me with resources to use when I am unsure of anything in jazz, and even explain jazz a little clearer than I have been able to. I found the articulation exercises and jazz history to be extremely helpful throughout our study in this course.

**Conclusion**

As I work towards the end of the program, I was able to apply many of the skills that I acquired in the curriculum writing and research classes to my new program this year. The use of research in my classroom and writing or possibly even re-writing a curriculum has been beneficial in the way that structure my program. Due to a lack in foundational structure, I have had to develop materials and methods to help new students in all grades 4-7 to help them gain success in their abilities as an instrumentalist and most of all help them learn to read music with ease. It has been a difficult start but once I took a step back and reevaluate our progress, I was able to identify other ways that that I could better help them.

Helping my students learn how to play, I have been able to employ some techniques that I have acquired in my study of Music Learning Theory. These methods have been tough to learn, grasp, and even employ because they way that the theory was introduced, but there are some positives to its success. The research has shown positive results, success at all levels, and many other attributes to the world of music education. As I work further into my career as a lifelong learner, educator, and musician, I plan to look further into some of the components that I may be able to employ in my music classroom.

My time in the Northern State University Master’s Program, I have found that what I have learned and will take away will yield a lifetime of continuous learning for me and my students. My love of learning and teaching has grown even more, and I plan to continue my education as an educator.

Although I entered this program extremely confident in my ways as an educator, I can’t say that my confidence has changed or been diminished, but I have gained more tools that I have added to my skill which will help to maintain and grow my confidence as an educator. I am appreciative of many of the experiences I have had in this program. While it was said that I have a very strong disdain for learning new things, that is truly not the case. I truly have and maintain a strong passion for music education that is and will remain successful and is student oriented. Although, I have many successful ways and abilities that allow me to maintain my due diligence in the way that I teach students of every level, there is always room to learn, experience and try new practices and methods. I entered this program primarily as a requirement to keep my teaching license in Massachusetts. However, I am graduating with a much more expanded and refreshed outlook on Music Education and will continue learn as I continue in my journey as a Master Educator.

**Appendix A**

**Personal Teaching Philosophy**

**Lucas Brown**

**(Edited December 2021)**

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As a professional educator and dedicated musician, the intention of a formal education in the fundamentals of music and music performance has become an integral focus in how I teach and what I teach. I teach with the idea that all students deserve a sound education in music, beginning in pre-school and through high school (NAfME, 2021). Ethics in my teaching is an integral part in the way that I plan my lessons, how I treat my students, and how I carry myself as a professional. My students reach their full potential through collaboration within the class and the understanding that we develop in our classroom (Regelski, 2012). I believe in the promise of every child through fostering the values of excellence, integrity, teamwork, and attitude. *“Open your eyes. Open Your Ears. Look at where you are and create what needs to be there.” – Jim Yancey* (Bowman, 2012, p. 447)

As an educator, it is my responsibility to demonstrate a firm and ethical position in my classroom (Regelski, 2012). I find that ethics are important in remaining fair and professional while providing my students the best possible education. Ethics is defined as the act of doing or performing ideas or concepts that are right for the benefit of those in reception, or simply doing what is right. When planning my instruction for my classes, I often look for structure that is most beneficial to my students and their learning capacities. Ethically, I believe that all students deserve the same opportunities and challenges, although each student demonstrates diverse learning styles. By placing them in the same situation with the same expectations, starting at their level of understanding, each student is provided with a musical experience. I strive to educate my students solely and effectively the highest ability, striving to solely meeting their individual needs.

While working ethically in our classroom, we work closely and collaboratively (Mccaleb, 1995). Collaboration is beneficial to me and the students as lifelong learners. Collaboration helps in many ways from understanding one another and the way we learn, and displays our understanding, and how we fit in to the whole picture. We work together to complete the picture, and demonstrate understanding, while learning from each other. Collaboration is integral in our growth as musicians. Collaboration is defined as the action of working with someone to produce or create something. This definition best suits the work in my classroom. As I plan instruction material, I include many instances where the students develop our final product.

I chose to go into the education profession because I believe in the promise of every child. Every child is deserving of a solid, structured, and formal education in a respectful, safe, and collaborative community (OECD, 2012). I understand that it is important to guide and help students remain invested and focused on goals as a lifelong learner. Each child displays their promise through their growth, understanding, and development of their own musical journey. I demonstrate respect for all learners, as a mentor in growth into responsible and respectful young citizens. Education should not only educate students for basic skills, but also for life skills. The promise of every child may be different for each student, but it is our promise as educators to guide them there.

Education has been very much a part of my life, starting when I met my first teacher, and especially my first music teacher. I have had a sound and passionate education; it affected my decision to be an educator. I strive to provide fascinating lessons, material that is atypical of music educators, and even subjects that are better suited for the learners in my classroom. It is my job to encourage all learners regardless of academia, or musical development (NAfME, 2021). I believe that all students are to learn music, from singing in tune to reading notes and playing instruments to composing music for others to enjoy. Music is for everyone, and academic allowing music to fit in to all subject areas.

Music Education, I believe is a complete education. Music teaches several things math, reading, social skills, social studies, history, and foreign language skills (Smith, 1962q). These areas are all incorporated in music in several different ways, while building meaningful and lasting relationships. Music also is a known and understood universal language. I also believe that it is important to encourage all my students to reach out and grasp something new each day and each lesson or topic.

Curriculum is generally dictated to an extent by the school, district, or state (Swanwick, 1991). This at times make instruction difficult for the instructor. Curriculum is only as effective as those who teach and understand it. I ask myself several questions when I am planning instruction so that I can successfully execute acquisition of concepts. What will help my students enjoy this content? Why am I teaching this concept? Is it leveled appropriately? How will the be successful during, and after my instruction? These questions are what drives my search for intrinsic, fascinating, engaging, and understandable content that fulfills the standards, and curriculum requirements.

My philosophy is not based on the general consensus, or typical practices. I strive to be different, effective, engaging, while ensuring students success. I believe that all these ideas are necessary in creating, developing, and building a successful music education program. My many years of success in growth, development, and student performance shows and speaks for itself. I believe in the promise of every child through fostering the values of excellence, integrity, teamwork, and attitude. I also believe that it is my mission to provide a respectful, safe, and collaborative community where all learners are invested. In the words of Jim Yancey- *“Open your eyes. Open Your Ears. Look at where you are and create what needs to be there.”*(Yancey, 2012)

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