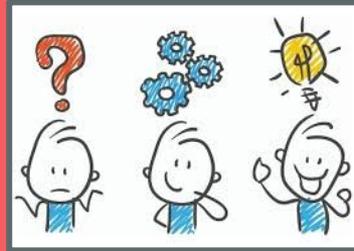


***A Lesson Program that
Inspires, Engages, and
Cultivates Independence***

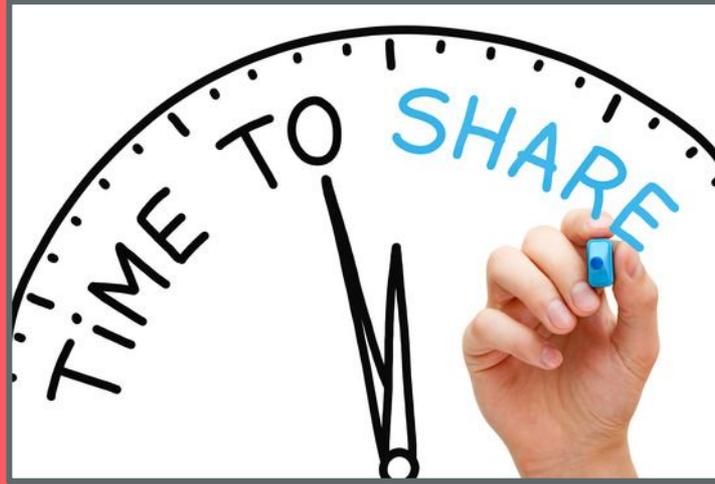


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*Instrumental music educators across the northeastern United States have long relied on pull-out group lessons as a mode for **supplementing learning** and **assessment** already occurring in the large ensemble space. These lessons, which may constitute the bulk of an educator's teaching load, are a rare find elsewhere in the nation. **Students, families, colleagues, and administrators have long viewed pull-out lessons with mixed feelings**, and some music educators feel that this time is better spent working with students not already enrolled in large ensemble classes. As districts take a closer look at how curricula promote the transfer and application of skills and consider how to most efficiently utilize their faculty while minimizing class disruptions, **it is prudent for music educators to reflect on how to best engage with students during this valuable instructional time.***

*In this session we will **acknowledge the benefits and challenges of the current pull-out lesson system, discuss how we might respond if lessons were no longer an option, and consider how we might reimagine this valuable time so our work with students centers on fostering musical independence, not merely pulling off a terrific concert.***



How do you utilize lesson time?

Pull-out lessons commonly offer...

**Personalized
instruction**

**Instrument-specific
training**

**Assessment
opportunities**

**Festival
preparation**

**Extending
musical
training**

**Guided
practice**

**Personalized
instruction**

**Special
projects**



I struggle to support a lesson program as it is typically utilized...



Realities...

Expensive for districts...

- One music teacher *could* teach many preps versus work that only supports students in the band (one prep)
- Increased scrutiny surrounding instructional efficacy and efficiency - *how are we utilizing this time?*
 - Assessment - but can't this be handled via recordings?
 - Providing critical support - but this really requires 1:1
 - Hammering notes and rhythms - reinforcing the idea that growth cannot happen without the teacher!



Mixed feelings exist among various constituencies concerning the structure/efficacy of pull-out instrumental instruction...

- Complexities of the school master schedule
- Concerns surrounding missed instruction when pulled for a lesson
 - Research has debunked this (though mostly from the mid-80's through early 2000's)
- Do lessons yield sufficient musical growth? *Are we offering something truly unique?*



Questions surrounding educational equity...

- Other courses would benefit from this specialized instructional time too!
- Often only available for instrumental music, not choral music

Realities...

Some fundamentals work but the bulk of time is spent drilling music for the concert or festivals...

- Promotes the idea that home practice really isn't necessary because the music will be "learned" in lessons
- Creating conformists, not musicians!
- So much repetition but why is X issue persisting?!?
- Rarely results in meaningful learning - students aren't synthesizing



Student buy-in is spotty...

- Fear of missing class
- Lessons are boring or intimidating
- Not all students approach instrumental music with our level of priority - band class is sufficient!



Teacher frustration/disengagement...

- We enable painfully slow growth
- Guilty until proven innocent...ack!
- The same thing week in and week out
- We use this time for clerical tasks



Realities...

Music educators do AMAZING WORK every single day in the classroom (lessons + !!)

Music educators make the most of a complex reality...a true “balancing act”

Each instrument has its own challenges that can be difficult to adequately address en masse (ensemble rehearsal period)

AND...

We must continue to engage in reflective practice daily:

- Are my learning activities rooted in student learning objectives?
- Are my learning activities creating an environment that is truly unique to lessons or a reenactment of rehearsal?
- Am I designing learning activities that promote inquiry and synthesis?
- Am I creating an environment that students WANT to be a part of?
- Is my lesson program truly irreplaceable?
- Are my students able to do this music thing without me by the time they graduate?



How do we proceed?

By asking questions!



Guiding questions...



- How do we create a lesson program that **amplifies**, not merely aids, that which is studied in the instrumental classroom?
- How do we curate learning activities that promote **synthesis** over recall?
- How do we **inspire** our students to become deeply **curious** about our art form?
- How do we **hook** our students with learning activities with which they cannot wait to **engage**?
- How does our lesson **curriculum** cultivate **independent musicians**?
- How will we sustain our robust program if pull-out lessons were discontinued?

How do we create a lesson program that amplifies, not merely aids, that which is studied in the instrumental classroom?

- How do we take concepts to the next level versus simply reheating them?
- Remember...students learn MUSIC through the medium of ensembles.
- What National Standards are best addressed in large ensemble vs. lessons?

Eleven Anchor Standards			
The 4 Processes are divided into 11 Anchor Standards shared by all 5 Arts Disciplines			
Cr	Pr	Re	Cn
Creating	Performing	Responding	Connecting
1. Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work.	4. Select, analyze, and interpret artistic work for presentation.	7. Perceive and analyze artistic work.	10. Relate and synthesize knowledge and personal experiences to inspire and inform artistic work.
2. Organize and develop artistic ideas and work.	5. Develop and refine artistic techniques and work for presentation.	8. Interpret meaning in artistic work.	11. Investigate ways that artistic work is influenced by societal, cultural, and historical context and, in turn, how artistic ideas shape cultures past, present, and future.
3. Refine and complete artistic work.	6. Convey meaning through the presentation of artistic work.	9. Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work.	

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How do we curate learning activities that promote synthesis over recall?

Reverse our approach to instruction... every lesson is a laboratory experience!



- **We are used to providing the solutions... “do X to fix Y”**
 - Try providing the *problem*...they experiment to find the solutions
 - You only prompt with questions
 - Your response to their ideas: “try it to see if it works!” -or- “now, try a different way!”
 - Be patient with them (think/explore time) before sharing your insight
- **We are used to teaching reading skills by making them read...**
 - Demonstrate/exercise literacy by generating something new with those skills!
 - Teach reading by making them compose within set parameters
 - “Generate a 4 measure melody, using X note values, that you are capable of performing by the end of the lesson”
 - Students check each other’s “math.” Also...did they perform what was written...meaning, did they use notation accurately to capture their original ideas?
- **How the HECK do we teach “interpretation?” (through a “mission,” not a lecture!)**
 - Take X (cheerful) melody and perform it in a “terrifying” way?
 - Why did you make the decisions you did?
 - What compositional devices result in conjuring horror/fear?
 - How do we make “terrifying sounds” on our instrument?

How do we hook our students with learning activities with which they cannot wait to engage?



- **Lessons cannot feel like an extension of the ensemble rehearsal...**
 - If they miss lessons, there is no other place where they will get this experience!
 - Unique and diverse repertoire (that contains comparable notational/technique scenarios)
 - A process that is truly democratic (teacher as resource, not as dictator)
- **Lessons are “missions,” not classes!**
 - Students are generating, not regurgitating (using the right “tools” for the job without being told)
 - Learning in the spirit of “play,” and we are playing along beside them
- **Failure isn’t possible...hear me out!**
 - Assessment is individualized (recordings)
 - Our response to their offering is ... “you’re getting closer,” versus “INCORRECT!”
 - They are encouraged to think *creatively*, not “correctly.”
 - “That worked...now can you think of a different way to do it?”
 - When technical issues emerge...
 - “Something in your performance distracted me...what was it? ...try again...how did you fix it?”

How do we inspire our students to become deeply curious about our art form?

By modeling curiosity (ask questions and speak your wonderment)

By becoming deeply aware of when we are being *pedagogically patronizing*

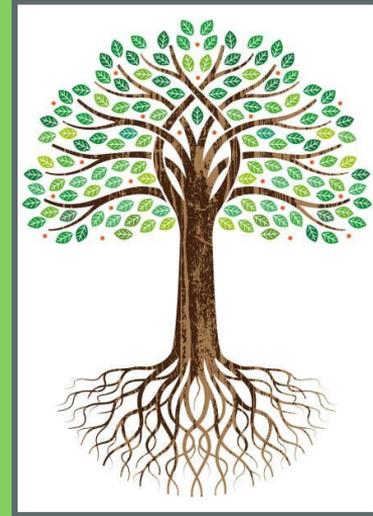
By focusing on the elements that intrigue when designing lessons!



- The “nuts and bolts” are introduced efficiently and aren’t “a big deal”
- Students won’t be successful in their missions without the proper tools (motivation)
- Spend the majority of the lesson messing around with cool musical concepts
 - “How music moves us emotionally”
 - Dynamic and tempo shifting are merely tools...not the goal of the lesson
 - Explore the options for musical storytelling (student-led, not teacher imposed)
 - Unpack the trends of composers who are master musical storytellers
 - Generate a list of technical deficits so, once learned, our storytelling will be more effective!
 - Identify an emotional state and compose music that speaks in that state
 - Carry this new state of comprehension into the ensemble rehearsal
- A robust process always yields a satisfying product!

How does our lesson curriculum cultivate independent musicians?

- Do we think of lessons as being rooted in a *unique curriculum* that aligns with and amplifies our *large ensemble curriculum*?
- Have we struck a healthy balance between *skill building* and *synthesis*?
- Do our students *know why music works the way it does* and *are they able to implement these enduring understandings in their own performance without prompting*?
- Are we selecting music that is *too difficult*? (white-knuckled ride to the concert)
- Worse...are we selecting music that *doesn't say anything*?!?
(Patronizing)
- When our students graduate, *are they able to "music" in a satisfying way without the oversight of a teacher*?
- How are we making rehearsals *exploratory*?



How will we sustain our robust program if pull-out lessons are discontinued?

Pullout (specialized) instruction is most prevalent in the Northeast and Midwest regions of the United States

- Why are they not a “thing” elsewhere in the nation?
 - Instrumental instruction starts later (middle school typically)
 - Large regional schools with less scheduling flexibility
 - Band rehearsals are typically scheduled daily
 - Greater emphasis on state testing = less willing to permit pullouts
 - Some districts have the resources to retain instrument specialists on the music staff for periodic masterclasses
 - Band director role is much more administrative in these massive programs



Retain the “exploration/mission” spirit in your rehearsals (should be doing this anyway)

Shift to chamber-music model (for a specified period of time) with musical study missions and an informance at the end

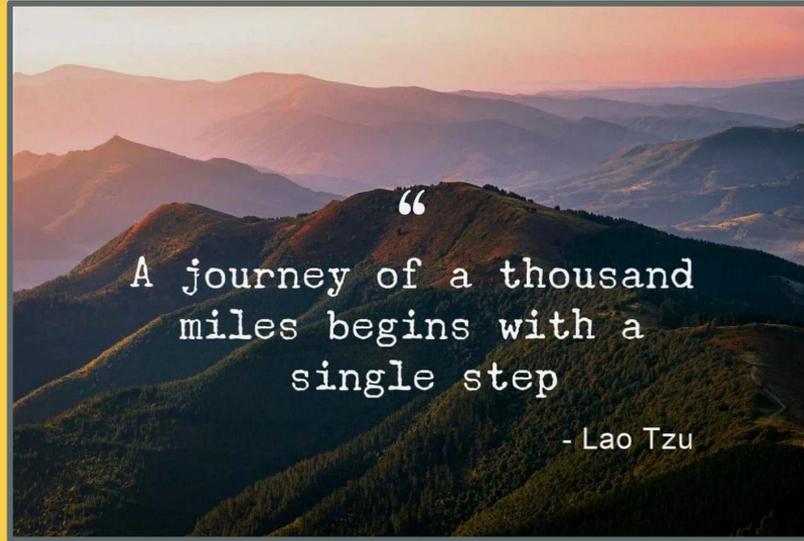
Asynchronous modules for engagement in these experiences

Assessments that offer student choice and require generating new, not merely repeating back exactly as it was taught

Provide sessions before or after school hours, or periodically during activity blocks, or as summer series

Create a lesson program so dynamic and pedagogically sound that doing away with it would be utterly unthinkable!

- Keep all constituents well informed of the amazing work happening in your space every day!



Breathe! Take this work one step at a time...

It's about amplifying your teaching...not fixing it!

Let's drive at the true meaning of "student (independence) centered"

Thoughts?

Questions?



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