

# PHILOSOPHY OF MUSIC EDUCATION: A PROCESS OF EXCELLENCE

“Insist on excellence and persist until you get it.” I first heard this quotation from the man who I consider to be one of the best teachers I have ever worked with, Dr. Tim Lautzenheiser. My philosophy revolves around the process of excellence. Since excellence, can be taken into two parts (excel | ence), we find that excellence literally is a process at which one excels. Hence, excellence is not a goal or a point which a student reaches, but rather a continual process.

The presence of a good, well-organized, and well-implemented music program in schools is essential for many reasons. To begin with, music, as an aesthetic experience, is a phenomenal art form, and is equivalent to any other fine art. Music enhances life; it gives life more fun, and provides meaning to many parts of one’s life. As a music educator, I believe in the education of future astute music patrons, if they student desires no other connection to music. All students should graduate secondary school with an appreciation for music of all types, and have knowledge to discern a good recording from a bad one, or make educated decisions on what they consider to be “excellent” music. Secondly, music creates better people. Music is an emotive art form, and makes people aware of beauty and art in the everyday world. Music also invokes feeling from people, even those without any kind of formal musical training. I believe that students will discover things they do not personally know about themselves through the involvement with the production, or the process of learning music.

Music education is a vital and necessary part of the educational system. Musical instruction is essential for every student in order to have a well-rounded education. Students should take several things away from music courses, upon the completion of secondary school (that is, after musical involvement in

education K-12). Hence, it is my personal belief that there is *something* in music for *every* student. It is my job, as a music educator, to expose students to a reasonably broad representation of many forms of music and ways of music-making in order to reach as many people as possible. These broad categories may include forms of music such as “typical” instrumental and vocal ensembles, guitar, electronic music, and other applications of musical knowledge (such as music technology introduction, etc.).

Being informed of different kinds of music (both in genre as well as actual production) will hopefully lead students to have a general *appreciation* for music and musicians. My goal is not to turn every student into a lover of Bach, Beethoven, or Mozart; instead, students should be able to *appreciate* what they experience and the musical genres associated with those experiences. Additionally, I feel it is extremely important to expose students to music other than “top 40” charts and music that they personally listen to.

I believe that good teaching involves many steps and methods. By taking a Socratic, or student-driven (student questioning) approach, I will help students become self-sustaining learners. Furthermore, I feel that as an educator, it is my job to *motivate* students to learn. Without motivation, teaching is pointless; teaching is essentially giving external cues to a student so that he or she eventually becomes a self-teacher and motivator, and a lifelong learner. In order to motivate and teach, I feel that teachers need to employ a variety of strategies, and ultimately do what works. As a teacher, I will never have the mentality or say to anyone else, “I taught them the information, they just didn’t learn it.” This is akin to a used car salesman saying “I sold them the car, they just didn’t buy it.” Teaching is the communication between instructor and student, and communication is a two-way street. Teachers should constantly evaluate the progress of students, and if there is a deviation from what is expected, steps should be taken to ensure adequate progress of each student. I believe that as a teacher, I can help students learn to become self-teachers and self-learners by asking open-ended (free response, rather than objective “yes/no”) questions in order to encourage self expression. The encouragement of self-expression, can take place through words even in a

classroom setting. This expression will (hopefully) lead to a more fulfilling experience both in the classroom and musically.

The teaching of music should be a generally hands-on, tactile learning experience as often as physically possible for students. I believe they must *experience* the creation, anticipation, and beauty of music for themselves. Theory behind music should come only after students have had sufficient opportunity to make sounds for themselves on their instruments.

I believe that music educators should make their facilities in the school completely accessible to students. The ambience of the room should be one in which artistic endeavor and expression is encouraged, rather than dampened. The attitude of the teacher should be a positive one, with a “glass half full” approach. Taking a positive attitude and complimenting students when they do good will lead to better relations with students, and a more fulfilling experience for all.

Through teaching, I believe I can learn just as much from my students as they can from me. It is important to listen to students, and not always be the decision maker, musically-speaking. It is also important that I continue to grow and learn as a teacher, musician, and school / community member.

I am a teacher. Teaching is what I believe in; it should reflect every quality that I want a student to possess some day. Perhaps Nietzsche’s words are applicable in this situation: “Without music, life would be a mistake.” Indeed, quotation serves as a reminder to why I am a teacher. I have a talent for artistry in sound, and I have a need to share this glorious art form we call music with others.